**ROBERT L. WILKEN: Same-sex unions**

# COMMONWEAL

$2.00

September 9, 1994

**BOOKS**

**ELIZABETH BARTELME on 'Banished Children of Eve'**

**ROBERT WORTH on V.S. Naipaul**

**Art: PAUL ELIE on Armenian manuscripts**

**Media: FRANK McCONNELL on 'X-Files'**

**The Last Word: ANNE CRAWFORD STORZ**

St. Charles Seminary Library
Carthagena, Ohio

USHERING IN THE AGE OF THE LAITY
Kenneth L. Woodward

DENNIS M. DOYLE Looks at popular spirituality

VOCATIONS ON PARADE
Thomas M. Landy

15

0 74470

**********3-DIGIT 458
CW 00079972 9422
ST CHARLES LIBRARY
ST CHARLES SEMINARY
2860 US RT 127
CARTHAGENA OH 45822-9999

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# CORRESPONDENCE

## Alleva is collectible

Arlington, Va.

*To the Editors:* Near the end of his review of "The Boys of Saint Vincent" [July 15], Richard Alleva urges that we approach this film "as a work of dramatic poetry" presenting "a portrait of irreducible evil," rather than as a journalistic effort to examine an issue impartially.

A similar sort of differentiation may be drawn regarding Alleva's own work. Alleva's reviews may not be poetry, but they are a breed apart from the film criticism usually offered in newspapers and magazines. He offers not only penetrating analysis, but also a little piece of his own soul in every column. Most other reviews I see are supercilious by comparison.

*Commonweal* readers are much favored to be able to read Alleva. Is a collection of his columns in the works?

JOHN GALLIVAN

## 'Boys of Saint Vincent'

Chicago, Ill.

*To the Editors:* Richard Alleva's review of "The Boys of Saint Vincent" was sensitive and balanced. I only wish he had mentioned the efforts of church leaders who sought to quash the film.

On two separate occasions, church officials and attorneys in Canada sought to block the showing of this powerful film. Just forty-eight hours prior to its scheduled broadcast on national Canadian television, they won an injunction to stop it. A similar attempt was made last year, but fortunately it failed.

The movie, which will air this fall in the United States, should do much to provoke further discussion of this critical issue.

BARBARA BLAINE

*The writer is founder and president of Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests (SNAP).*

*"Marvelous. I can't remember when I've been so traumatized."*

## NFP and sexuality

Port Washington, N.Y.

*To the Editors:* You are to be congratulated for publishing Paul Murray's article on *Humanae vitae* [July 15]. It is refreshing to read a lay person's praise for natural family planning based on personal experience. His points are right on the mark. My wife and I married in our thirties. After a year and a half we were blessed with the birth of our daughter. We have been practicing NFP since the death of our second child, a son, eight years ago; since then we have been blessed with another son. Along with our experience of Marriage Encounter, NFP has led to a deeper understanding of our spirituality and of each other.

Rather than being linked with sacrifice, as the editors contend in their response, NFP needs to be looked at as a key opening a door through which a deeper sexuality may be explored, whereby all our actions become acts of life-giving love. It is not always easy. Few things in life are.

KEVIN HICKSON

## The logic is beautiful

Saint Cloud, Minn.

*To the Editors:* I write to congratulate you for your fairness and good judgment in publishing Paul Murray's article on *Humanae vitae*. The logic of his thought is beautiful to follow. Thank you!

With respect to the relevant editorial ["It Still Doesn't Scan"] in the same issue: In agreement with you, I am genuinely glad that more women are rising to claim respect, and that more men are coming to realize the rightness of these claims. Hopefully, a wider acceptance of *Humanae vitae* will increase this number.

(MOST REV.) GEORGE H. SPELTZ

*The writer is the retired ordinary of the diocese of Saint Cloud.*

## What's in a name? Lots

Wilmington, N.C.

*To the Editors:* Your July 15 editorial, "It Still Doesn't Scan," forcefully reminds us that the purpose of "natural family planning" is to prevent the transmission of life. The use of the term NFP obscures this purpose. Not only that, the term begs thorny philosophical questions about natural law and alienates the unconvinced by its implicit claim of righteousness and moral superiority.

*(Continued on page 29)*

*Commonweal* is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, Ohio 44691. *Commonweal* articles also are available at many libraries and research facilities on CD-ROM and in electronic data bases. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional offices. Copyright © 1994 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $2. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $39; Canada, $41; foreign, $44. Special two-year rate: U.S. $67; Canada, $71; foreign, $77. Surcharge for air mail delivery to Europe, North Africa, Central or South America, $35 per year; for other parts of the world, $44 per year. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

*Illustrations:* Cover, Antonucci; p. 2, Punch, Rothco; p. 4, Schochet, Rothco; pp. 6, 27, Ross, Rothco; pp. 8, 9, Baloo, Rothco; p. 14, © 1994 The Pierpont Morgan Library; p. 18, Schwadron, Rothco.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMONWEAL

## CONTENTS

Volume CXXI, Number 15

Correspondence: 2

Editorial: 3

Politics on parade: *Thomas M. Landy* 4

Complexity of community: *Liz Leibold McCloskey* 6

Pointing the way: *John Garvey* 8

Ushering in the age of the laity: *Kenneth L. Woodward* 9

Poetry: *Leonard Kress* 12

Art: *Paul Elie* 14

Media: *Frank McConnell* 15

Traffic jam on the spiritual superhighway: *Dennis M. Doyle* 18

## BOOKS

Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe, by John Boswell: *Robert L. Wilken* 24

Banished Children of Eve, by Peter Quinn: *Elizabeth Bartelme* 26

A Way in the World, by V.S. Naipaul: *Robert Worth* 27

Pilgrims at the Automat: *Anne Crawford Storz* 30

## STAFF

Editor: Margaret O'Brien Steinfels
Managing Editor: Patrick Jordan
Associate Editor: Paul Baumann
Production Editor: Jacqueline Dowdell
Senior Writer: Robert G. Hoyt
Business Manager: Richard Haas
Poetry: Rosemary Deen
Design: Emil Antonucci
Screen: Richard Alleva
Columnists: John Garvey, J. Bryan Hehir, Abigail McCarthy, David R. Carlin, Jr., Sidney Callahan, Liz Leibold McCloskey, Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Jr.
Intern: Mary Lee Freeman
Staff: Harriette Balsky, Carmen P. Alava, Sandra Smith
Advertising Manager: Ruth E. Taylor
Publisher: Edward S. Skillin

*Commonweal*, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly except Christmas/New Year's; and monthly July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038. Telephone: (212) 732-0800. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Ruth E. Taylor, 11 Graffam Rd., So. Portland, Me. 04106 (207) 799-4387, classified advertising correspondence to 15 Dutch St. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 15 Dutch St. New York, N.Y. 10038.

Commonweal *welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.*

# Picking a fight

For many long months the Vatican and the United States have been sparring over the International Conference on Population and Development meeting in Cairo this month. Given the world's looming quandaries over development and population, their quarrel has struck many people as a ludicrous waste of time and energy. Initially we shared that view. In the first place: Why fight? It is only a conference. Moreover, it's a conference that will very possibly come and go without much discernible impact on the wretched of the earth, including many resident in Cairo with whom the several thousand delegates will jostle for space and limited resources—a perfect example of the problem. In the second place: The Vatican can't win. Rome will always be the heavy on issues staked out by feminists; in many quarters, it has little credibility on women's rights or women's issues no matter the statements of pope or bishops on the dignity of woman and her equality with man.

But a closer look at the Cairo proposal gives grounds for the Vatican's complaints—the quarrel it picked is one worth having especially if it keeps the language of "reproductive rights" from infecting the rest of the world. Vatican questions focused primarily on language in the draft Plan of Action that seemed to allow abortion to be introduced as a routine practice in family planning services. (The persistent linking in the draft of the phrases "family planning" and "reproductive health services" made this at least a legitimate question for the Vatican to raise.) The draft also encourages governments to extend family planning services to adolescents; in fact, it seems to assume, as Vatican representative Monsignor Diarmuid Martin noted at a UN preparatory meeting this past April, "that each individual, including adolescents from an early age, may be 'sexually active.'" The Vatican also questioned the real meaning of phrases such as "reproductive rights" and sought clarification of overarching definitions such as the one offered of reproductive health: "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes." Does this unexceptional, if overinflated, language (no doubt modeled on the World Health Organization's definition of health) mask, as the Vatican suggested, a notion of sexuality largely removed from interpersonal responsibility, moral considerations, and communal contexts?

That the U.S. government became the focus of the Vatican's criticism has something to do with the pope's view that Americans breed and export the "culture of death." But the Vatican's attention may also have been drawn by the apparent ingenuousness of this administration, specifically Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Timothy Wirth, in not recognizing that the language of "reproductive rights" was a red flag, and not only to the Vatican. So inured are Clintonites like Wirth to expansive claims of reproductive and gender rights in the United States that they are

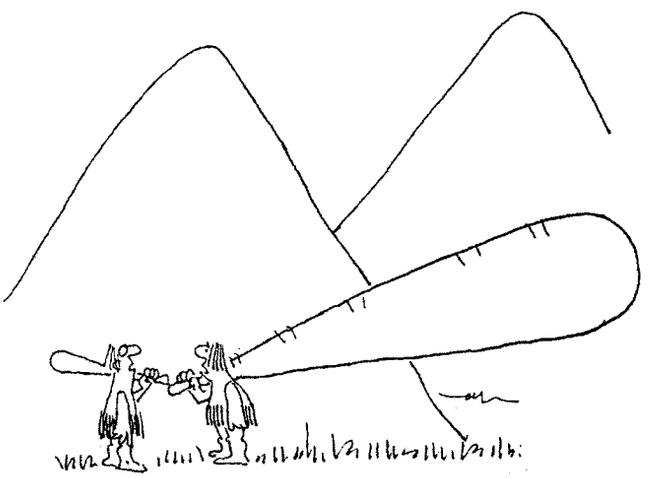


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unable to foresee trouble on the international front. Where are their multicultural antennae when they need them? And where a sense of modesty about promoting to the developing world what is so problematic in our own? The land of reproductive rights, sex education, and widely available contraceptives has one of the highest abortion rates in the world, the highest pregnancy rate among unmarried teen-agers in the developed world, and family breakdown at an unprecedented level.

After much back and forth, the Clinton administration has made it clear that it does not want a fight with the Vatican in Cairo. Vice President Al Gore, who will lead the American delegation, told the National Press Club that the United States was not working to make abortion a guaranteed international right; did not think abortion was or should be a form of family planning; and endorses the Plan of Action's call for women's education, children's health, economic development, and other means to stabilize population growth as common ground upon which everyone could agree and build. Whether that will ease matters in Cairo depends on whether the rest of the American delegation agrees with Gore and how far the Vatican will go to press opposition not only to abortion, but to artificial contraception, about which it has been more muted.

In fact, the draft Plan of Action is the work of many nations and population groups, and the contested chapters are only a part of a document that attempts to integrate questions of population and development in ways that honor their complex and varied interplay in many different countries and cultures. There is no talk of population bombs or population explosions, nor of zero-population growth or life-boat ethics—scare language of the fifties and sixties that gave license to coercion, relatively subtle (paying men to be sterilized in India) and not-at-all subtle (forced abortion in China). Since then, language has changed and so has the imperious view that it is the poor that must control their desire for children while the rich consume the earth's resources. Curbing overconsumption, encouraging married couples to act responsibly and freely in deciding how many children to bring into the world, and sustaining precious human and natural resources are goals the Vatican and many other countries champion. If no fire fights break out between the feminists in the American delegation and the black suits from the Vatican, it is a message the media might succeed in conveying to the world—that is, of course, if threats from Muslim militants don't end in capturing the headlines and derailing the conference altogether.



*"Now where did you say the conference is?"*

## ET CETERA

**THE NEW ETHICS** Earlier this year a Scottish physician argued that it could be ethical to harvest the eggs of aborted female fetuses in order to enhance the supply available to infertile women. This would make genetic mothers of fetuses aborted by their own mothers. That proposal now has been ruled out of order by the British Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority. Among the reasons cited by the London *Tablet* was "an instinctive adverse reaction" among the public known as the "yuk factor."

Yes. But is it an absolute factor?

REPORT FROM ATTLEBORO

## POLITICS ON PARADE

NOT IN FRONT OF THE CHILDREN

For longer than I've known him, my friend Jim has aspired to run for Congress. He met his wife, my college friend Lina, on the campaign trails almost a decade ago, and kept involved in Democratic party political circles while he worked as an advocate for Oxfam. It's been good for me to know someone my own age with not only the intelligence and drive to be in Congress, but priorities that seem to be in the right place. This year, Jim decided to make his own run against a freshman incumbent.

So this summer when Jim asked me, I was more than willing to spend a few hours campaigning for him at a Fourth of July parade in Attleboro, Massachusetts, a small city at the edge of Jim's home district which was celebrating its 300th birthday. The work was simple—greeting people and handing out campaign leaflets before the parade. I'd never done any campaigning, so I saw it as a good opportunity to learn something.

It turned out to be a perfect day for a parade. People set up chairs along the route, and almost everyone I met was friendly and in great public spirit. It probably didn't hurt that many of those who saw the photo on the handbill thought that I was the one running for Congress.

But about ten minutes into my duties, a sixtyish-looking man informed me, quite earnestly, that I shouldn't be campaigning at a parade like this. I was puzzled. "Aren't we here to cele-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brate July Fourth and the birth of a democratic nation?"

"This town has ordinances against campaigning," he replied. I rejoined with a few startled words about the Constitution and its First Amendment. We spoke awhile longer, but I sensed that I was not making much progress. I moved on.

A few blocks and a few hundred people later, I encountered another man on the steps of a public building. "You're not allowed to do any campaigning," he told me. His challenge sounded authoritative, and drew the attention of a number of onlookers. Back I turned to lesson one on the Constitution and another appeal to the meaning of the Fourth of July. But talk about the Constitution didn't seem to impress him. "What if some girl wants to walk bare-ass naked down the street? I suppose you want to protect that, too," he rebutted.

"Well, sir, the right to free speech—especially political speech—is rather explicit in the Constitution. I don't remember seeing anything there about walking bare-ass naked."

The bystanders seemed to favor the First Amendment, but my challenger continued: "It cheapens a day like this when politicians are out here trying to get you to vote for them." Before moving on, I replied in my most agreeable tone, "Well, sir, if we can't celebrate our democratic system today, it doesn't seem that there's much to celebrate."

More blocks of people waiting and talking with neighbors. Finally, just as the parade was approaching and I was about to give out my last flyers, a third man ambled out from among the parade watchers and said: "You're not handing out campaign literature, are you? Politicians have no right pushing their own private gains at a public event. This is the town's day, not the politicians'." Weary of the failure of the constitutional tack, I responded that lots of people were *selling* things up and down the route. "Should that be forbidden?"

"No," he replied, because that was a *public* service. The parade was approaching, so I smiled, gave up, and walked back to watch the parade with Lina, Jim, and their three-year-old, Anthony.

The veterans were at the head of the parade. As I watched them pass, I couldn't help thinking about the sincerity of my three critics whom I might otherwise have dismissed as cranks. What was odd was not only what they believed, but that they seemed to believe that their views were patriotic and true to what's best about America. My thoughts hearkened back to courses I had taught on foreign policy and international relations at the time of the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union. I learned then how many of my students thought that capitalism, not democracy, was the greatest good America could export to those lands.

Given the charge about pursuing "private gains" at a public event, I was startled when, not far behind the veterans, a small float passed that advertised a wholesale gold jewelry outfit. Actually, a lot of businesses followed: the local carting company showed off a shiny new truck and dumpsters draped in garlands; the local dance school dragged along its five- and six-year-olds in tutus, and got a bit of free advertising. I wondered how many people thought that this was out of place at a public parade.

The standard public services were out in full dress. Fire trucks and ambulances delighted young Anthony and the other children, as they have for generations. The local public schools were represented, as were the 4-H and the literacy volunteers.

Then there were the local churches, most of which were in evidence, starting with the Bahai. The best float was All Saints Episcopal's. It depicted an Ark aground on Mount Ararat, covered by an arching rainbow of balloons. Saint John the Evangelist, the local RC establishment, spotlighted its school. A float sponsored by one of the local Evangelical churches was covered with scriptural passages about salvation. "What do you make of that?" one woman nearby asked a friend. "Do you think they should allow that?" To my regret, the friend didn't respond.

All the church floats featured groups of smiling people, mostly children, usually singing or waving. They tried to communicate something about themselves and to celebrate their presence in the community. But they didn't seem to draw the same enthusiastic response from the crowd as the 4-H Club, the literacy volunteers, or the veterans. It occurred to me that most of the church floats were greeted in a fashion analogous to the various radio stations which also sponsored displays in the parade. One such station advertised its "magic" format by featuring a magician and a fairy. Another played rap music and sported boogie-ing dancers. Plenty of diversity of choices on the dial, but despite such diversity, I sensed that the churches and radio stations were not seen by the parade-goers as public institutions that belong to and serve the whole community.

My afternoon at the parade revealed a rather startling set of messages about what is "public" and what is "private" in America today. From some voices in the crowd, it seemed that running for office had come to be understood primarily as a matter of private gain; whereas dumpster companies and jewelry firms were treated as public institutions. Religion was best kept private, presumably for the sake of the common good.

I can't be certain that this was the majority view of the spectators, but I also can't help thinking of these impressions in the context of what both Jim and I aspire to do in our different ways. Society surely suffers when people construe aspirations to public service and public ministry as something private. Today, both endeavors are subject to deep scrutiny, as if representing some kind of communal hope in public ought to be considered a risky business. My own understanding of Catholic social thought, however, prompts me to view all sorts of activities (even private carting services) as bearing public dimensions, entailing public responsibilities. But I worry that in our own culture these activities are becoming the only ones that are safe to enter and safe to think of as public—not partisan, not capable of raising our hopes too much or failing us too badly.

Anthony, the three-year-old, told me that his goal is to become a truck driver, like one of the guys pulling the floats. It's a noble enough aspiration, but perhaps with a little encouragement, Lina or Jim or I can convince him that it might be worthwhile to consider public service. THOMAS M. LANDY

*Thomas M. Landy, S.J., is assistant director of the Leadership Education Project at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# COMPLEXITIES OF COMMUNITY

## LOVE THY NEIGHBORS, ALL OF THEM

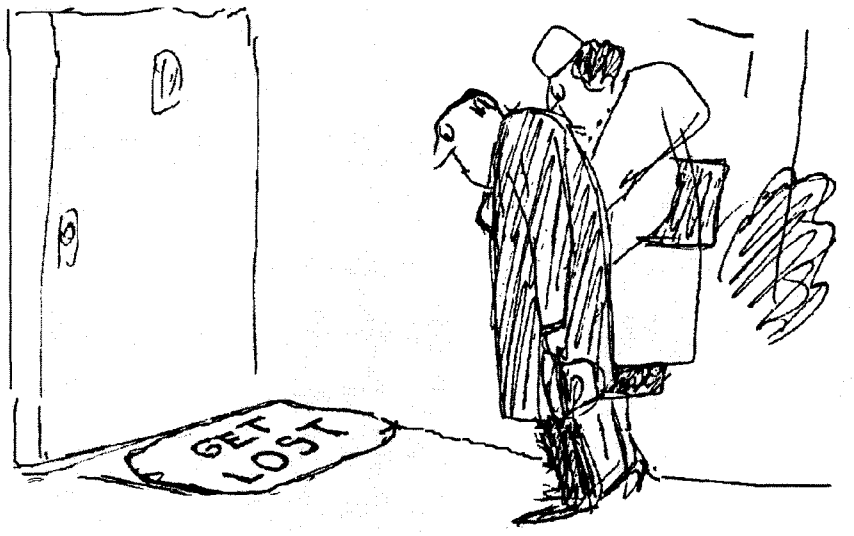
The biblical mandate to feed the hungry sounds so simple. Yet watching the clash between residents of Foggy Bottom and the newly relocated Western Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., belies such simplicity. In May 1994, one month after the opening of the new church and its breakfast program, neighbors accused the church's pastor of being "un-Christian," "a hypocrite," "a liar," while these opponents were described as "evil," "disingenuous," and "nuts" by some involved in the church.

For eleven years, Western Presbyterian, located in a commercial area of D.C., housed Miriam's Kitchen, a breakfast program for the homeless, in its basement. When the International Monetary Fund (IMF) bought the old church for $24 million, enough to build a new church in a residential neighborhood a few blocks away, the church accepted the deal on the condition that Miriam's Kitchen move with them. The Foggy Bottom Association and the Advisory Neighorhood Council opposed this. Citing this intense opposition, the D.C. Board of Zoning Administration required a zoning variance for the feeding program.

Western Presbyterian brought the case to the federal district court, arguing that feeding the hungry is an "accessory use" of a church and should be allowed as a matter of right. Based on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the church argued that the zoning decision violated its religious liberty. The court granted a preliminary injunction, allowing the meal program to proceed without zoning approval. The city plans to appeal the ruling. Although the D.C. City Council has said it is committed to making the zoning law more accommodating to religious practices, a coalition of local churches says this does not go far enough.

How are religious practices to be defined? Does freedom of religion demand that feeding the homeless, running a day-care center, or building low-income housing be allowed under zoning laws as "a matter of right," rather than as "special use" requiring zoning board review? The issue is being tested in courts across the country. But in Washington the scope of religious liberty is not the only issue at stake.

An equally pressing question is how Western Presbyterian Church and at least some of its neighbors could harbor such profound distrust for one another. I first heard about the controversy from my uncle, a Jesuit priest, who helps operate a soup kitchen in an inner-city D.C. Catholic parish. Geared up to write about our Christian obligation to feed the hungry, I was ready to lament the grumpy and stingy attitude of the neighborhood. But as I talked to opponents and proponents, I was astounded at the mutual animosity and conflicting versions of the "simple facts" of the case. I asked the pastor of Western Presbyterian how much the situation came from a breakdown in communication between the church and its neighbors. He likened their relationship to a divorce. In fact, I wonder if there was ever a marriage. Wasn't there a way for the church to continue feeding homeless people in its new setting without leading to this divisive situation? Shouldn't there have been more aggressive initial efforts at building a relationship?




The church says the neighborhood leaders were never open to having a meal program and automatically took an unwelcoming stance. Feeding the homeless, argues its pastor, is central to the church's ministry. The meal program in the basement was nonnegotiable as far as he was concerned. Now his mission is to win a legal battle to keep Miriam's Kitchen in his new church.

Some of the neighbors doubt the church's commitment to the homeless, accusing it of acting out of a financial, rather than a moral, imperative. Dwindling membership makes the money donated to run the kitchen attractive and possibly critical to survival, according to some neighborhood leaders. They maintain that Western Presbyterian Church made no effort to establish any connection to the community. A majority of the congregation lives outside of Washington, making the church seem an intruder, insensitive to the fear of crime shared by many elderly residents. Neighborhood leaders claim that at their first meeting with the pastor, he "slammed down his fists" and was "impossible."

Western Presbyterian downplays these fears, noting that more crimes in D.C. are committed by nonhomeless males than by



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

homeless ones. Advocates for the church say they have bent over backward to try to meet the objections of the neighborhood. They say they have been working with the neighbors for over five years to try to minimize any negative impact of the move, and they discount the neighborhood leaders' objections as unrepresentative of the whole community. As evidence of its concern, the church points to its security guard who stands outside the church during breakfast, its policy that the homeless must leave the premises immediately after eating, and the trash brigade that combs the streets daily. Some neighbors dismiss these gestures, saying they are designed for the church's protection rather than for the good of the neighborhood.

A leader of the Foggy Bottom Association says she would have been more comfortable using smaller, scattered sites rather than "warehousing" the homeless in a large-scale meal program. An Advisory Neighborhood Commission representative claims that they found one alternative site—more convenient for those whom it is designed to feed—but that the church refused to consider it, insisting that the program be run out of the church building.

The lawyer for Western Presbyterian says that in the spirit of compromise, the church would have been willing to accept an alternative site, but that one was never offered.

The church and the neighbors agree on one thing: At least half of those homeless coming to the new church, about 150 to 200 people, live in the downtown commercial zone. Given its bargaining power with the IMF, perhaps the church could have kept a kitchen open near the old site for those homeless that live there, and opened a smaller program in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood for the homeless that live there. Maybe if the church had launched an aggressive outreach effort before it moved and long before it sought zoning approval, the general reception would have been different.

Community building is hard work. Even if the new D.C. zoning law enables churches to set up any program as a matter of right (which might make good constitutional sense), it makes avoidance of community building easier. Only now, after the breakfast program is a fait accompli and considerable bad feeling has been generated, is Western Presbyterian starting to reach out to the neighborhood. They are starting a Bible study group for the elderly. Some of the older residents of the community are offering to volunteer at the kitchen. The church is starting an after-school arts program for neighborhood public school kids. I wonder what difference it would have made if this embrace of the community had begun earlier, before the zoning administrator ruled on the church's application. Who knows?

Sometimes I wish Christians abided by Jewish law and walked to church on the Sabbath. Churches, then, could not avoid being a vital and accepted part of the surrounding community. While it may be true that at times Christians are called to be prophets and to alienate their neighbor, even sometimes to reject their own mother and father, there are also times when kingdom-building exerts different demands on us—demands that we be understanding, compassionate, and humble. □


Contemporary Catholic Theology

**SEEING THE LORD**
**Resurrection and Early Christian Practices**
MARIANNE SAWICKI
Rooted in six exegetical studies, Marianne Sawicki's book recovers traces of early Christian teaching and liturgical practices that show how the resurrection of Jesus was—and can still be—understood and affirmed.
"A profound concept underlying this investigation makes it plausible for a postmodern Christian to believe with integrity in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. . . . A very creative book by a diligent and gifted writer."
—VERNON K. ROBBINS
352pp $20.00 paper Code 1-2709

**KARL RAHNER**
**Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning**
GEFFREY B. KELLY, editor
Situates Rahner's thought firmly in his biography and spirituality and includes selected texts beginning with the spiritual life and comprising something of a mini-*summa* of Rahner's contributions to the chief areas of theology. Includes select bibliography that neatly organizes the vast work by and on Rahner.
400pp $14.00 paper Code 1-3400

**SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY**
**Roman Catholic Perspectives**
FRANCIS SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA and JOHN P. GALVIN, editors
"For Protestants as well as Roman Catholics, these volumes are state-of-the-art systematic theology. Here for the first time the disciplinary barriers that have divided the confessions are broken through, not only in biblical or historical studies, but in dogmatics itself. Perhaps only in America could this happen."
—GEORGE A. LINDBECK
Volume 1: 352pp $27.00 cloth Code 1-2460
Volume 2: 384pp $27.00 cloth Code 1-2461
Volume 3: 736pp $48.00 cloth Code 1-2459

**LOVE YOUR ENEMIES**
**Discipleship, Pacifism, and Just War Theory**
LISA SOWLE CAHILL
"A clear, useful, engaging, and instructive account of Christian ethics on the issues of killing, war, and peace. . . . [that] will provide a standard resource on Christian attitudes toward war and peace. The book will be widely read, discussed, and taught."
—RICHARD B. MILLER
288pp $17.00 paper Code 1-2700

FORTRESS PRESS
*At bookstores or from*
Augsburg Fortress, Publishers
426 South Fifth Street, Box 1209
Minneapolis, MN 55440-1209
*Postage and handling additional*
**1-800-328-4648**




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# POINTING THE WAY

## FOR THOSE WITH EYES TO SEE

There is a common assumption among modern, secular people that in ancient times people were more credulous than they are now—hence the belief in miracles: We know better than to believe in them today. Ancients could believe, for example, in a virgin birth because they knew less than we know today about what is possible or likely.

But this view of the ancient understanding is plainly nonsense. The virgin birth, and the raising of Lazarus, and the healing of a blind man, were considered worthy of notice precisely because they seemed just as impossible to our ancestors as they do to us. We shy away from the notion of the miraculous because it shakes up our sense of a predictable world; it challenges the belief that the realm of faith is subjective, private, and essentially sentimental. We are right to try to understand the multivalent meanings in miracle stories, the symbolic importance of the doctrine of virgin birth, the fact that the forgiveness of sins which accompanies many of Jesus' healings is truly the greater miracle, though this is ignored by the witnesses; but we tend to slide into an easy sense that these stories are "merely symbolic," with an accent on the "merely," and symbols reduced to the level of the metaphorical.

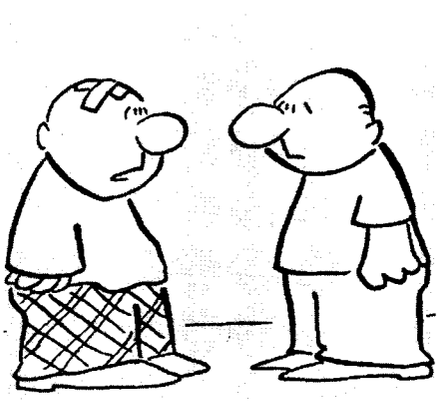
On the other side are those fundamentalists who regard the miraculous as a kind of proof. Simone Weil once wrote that if Hitler rose from the dead any number of times she still would not think he was the son of God.

A miracle proves nothing. Any phenomenon can be dismissed, or explained in some other way. And alleged miracles can be faked. The annual liquefaction of the blood of Saint Januarius can be duplicated scientifically, and there is nothing wrong with being skeptical about the motives of churchmen, especially where anything financial is concerned.

Here is the paradox: If you truly have faith in God, you do not need a miracle as proof of anything. If you do not have faith, no seemingly miraculous event will persuade you that faith makes sense. Anything that seems miraculous might conceivably have another, entirely materialistic explanation. But there is a converse to this. Seemingly explicable things, apparently mundane moments, may have a miraculous depth.

A week before this was written the church celebrated the Feast of the Transfiguration. In the Orthodox icon of the feast, the figure of Christ transfigured is surrounded by a mandoria, an almond-shaped form which signifies, among other things, something that is visible to the eyes of faith. It occurs to me that if an agnostic had been present on Tabor he might have been unable to see what was before him, or would have explained it away.

The conviction that miracles can never happen will make us impervious to them. I know of a case where a child who was dying of a brain tumor was cured, after his parents asked a priest to anoint him. X-rays showed no sign that anything had ever been wrong. The child's doctor, an atheist, was no doubt convinced that this was one of those one-in-a-million odd cases where something just goes away. I believe it was a miracle; but I have some sympathy with the doctor. What about all of those people who pray, whose children nevertheless die? What about those dreadful fundamentalists who imply that if only those parents had more faith, or the right kind of faith, their child would have been healed? What are miracles for, if they happen so randomly and if they are, some might say bitterly, so unfairly distributed? One child healed in France; thousands of children macheted in Rwanda.



*"It was a penny from heaven."*

From the beginning, our tradition has said that miracles can happen. Elijah and Elisha, Jesus, and any number of saints were healers. But all of the people who were healed eventually died of something that wasn't healed. What are healings, or any miracles, for?

A friend recently sent me an essay which contained a wonderful quote from the French poet, Paul Eluard. "There is another world," he wrote, "but it is in this one." Our ordinary perceptions are flat and two-dimensional. Something must take us deeper if we are to understand and live as fully as we sense we can. The miraculous is one way in which this deepening happens: we are pointed to the real, to a world in which we are meant not to be sick, or dying, but to live. Miracles "fix" nothing, but point forward to the age to come, the time when "death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain...."

The Bible is full of anticipated things. The bread and wine broken at the Last Supper point toward a crucifixion yet to come, and toward the Eucharist in which we celebrate Christ's continued presence among us. The Transfiguration points forward to a Resurrection which had not happened yet. The miracles of healing point to a world to come. The Kingdom which lies ahead but also, as the Eluard quote can remind us, within, is a Kingdom which is implicit now, and is revealed not only in the miracles that astonish us, but the daily miracles (forgiveness, the experience of great beauty, selfless love) that do not astonish us enough. □



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# USHERING IN THE AGE OF THE LAITY

## SOME CRANKY RESERVATIONS

KENNETH L. WOODWARD

I've never identified myself as a Catholic layman. Just a Catholic. What interests me is the *koinonia*, the commonality that we all share as Catholics. Never, I must confess, have I given much thought to lay-clerical distinctions. I recognize that these distinctions are real—especially for laity who work for the church—which may be one reason why I knew in my bones that I could never work in its employ, certainly not as a journalist. I admire those who do and wonder how, seeing the fair bride of Christ up close, warts and all, they keep their faith intact.

I never studied theology in school—all Notre Dame offered in my era were intellectually noncaloric religion courses. And although I never felt the call to the priesthood, I am thankful that I grew up at a time when the priesthood was regarded as a "higher calling" and one that an adolescent had to give some thought to simply as a part of growing up. That may sound contradictory, but in an age when anyone who has a job considers himself a professional, I like the notion that some callings may in fact be "higher" than others. A journalist, after all, is not a poet any more than Madonna is Mozart. So I count it a loss that young Catholic boys are no longer brought up in ways that would prompt them as a matter of course to consider the priestly vocation. My feeling has always been, let priests do well what they are called to do, and I'll do as best I can what I am called to do. And, someday I'd like to meet the naive person who said marriage is easier than the celibate priesthood.

I never was an altar boy. And I quit the high school sodality two weeks after I was subscripted, mainly because I couldn't remember all the mysteries of the Rosary, and I didn't much like Mariology anyhow. So far, no one has dared ask me to become a eucharistic minister, though in a pinch I have taken up the collection. Apart from weddings, no one has ever tapped me for the brotherhood of ushers. (Have you ever noticed that the usher at every Mass is always the same person? All over the world, in every church where I've attended Mass, it's always the same guy.)

When journalistic colleagues discover that I am a Roman Catholic they always ask, "Are you practicing?" To which I invariably reply: "I stopped practicing a long time ago." Which is to say, I just go out and do it. What is it about Roman Catholicism, I've often wondered, that takes so much practice? I mean, it's not like learning to play the piano. Why is it you never hear of a practicing Presbyterian? Or a practicing Pentecostal? "Observant" won't do either, as in the sentence, "He's an observant Jew." I know lots of practicing Catholics who are not terribly observant. "Born again" simply doesn't fit Catholics, implying as it does that one has been "saved" through accepting Jesus as his "personal" Lord and Savior. Now I think we all need to be converted—over and over again. But having a personal savior has always struck me as, well, elitist, like having a personal tailor. I'm satisfied to have the same Lord and Savior as everyone else. Besides, Catholics can never be certain they are saved, even if they went to Notre Dame, which is one of the reasons Catholicism is so interesting.

Back in the first Nixon presidency I did a cover story on Billy Graham. I asked him, "Billy Graham, what's it feel like knowing you are saved?"

"Ken," he said, "it's a wonderful feeling." But suppose, I

*"All his life he worried about not getting into heaven, and now he's worried about* extradition."

KENNETH L. WOODWARD, *author of* Making Saints *(Simon and Schuster), is religion editor and a senior writer at* Newsweek. *This article is adapted from a convocation address delivered at the Chicago Theological Union.*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

**COPIES AVAILABLE**

**THE OREGON TRAIL TO DEATH**
***Euthanasia on the ballot***
Courtney Campbell
*Commonweal*
August 19, 1994
*Plus*
Commonweal *1993 Euthanasia Supplement*
*articles by*

**DANIEL CALLAHAN**
**LEON KASS**
**&**
**CARLOS GOMEZ**

**$3.00**
**Phone 212-732-0800**

**COMMONWEAL** 15 Dutch Street, New York, NY 10038


went on, you were to crawl into the hay with the organist. What then? "Well," Graham replied, "I just wouldn't get as high a place in heaven."

I told this story to Senator Mark Hatfield (R-Oreg.), who is a devout Baptist. "Ken," he said, "if I didn't know I was saved I couldn't get up in the morning."

"Mark," I replied, "if I KNEW I was saved, I WOULDN'T get up in the morning."

That's a major difference in religious understanding and sensibility. By the grace of God alone I am a Catholic, and if through the church he has his way with me, I may yet learn to pray with Jesus that hardest of prayers, that nub of the Gospels, "Not my will but Thine be done." That's challenge enough.

I can't pretend to know what the future of the church in America will be, or how the laity and clergy will rearrange themselves, but I do have some cranky observations to make on the topic.

First, the Catholic priesthood. Every American Catholic is concerned by the decline in priestly vocations, and the prospect of priestless parishes. The problems are real. But before hastening to this or that solution, such as ordaining women or married men, we need to look beyond Catholic walls and examine the problem from a wider perspective—a perspective which so far seems to have eluded John Paul II. The truth of the matter is, no one is getting many quality applicants, male or female, married or single, for the Christian ministry. I'm in my fifties, and mine was the last generation in which the call to the established, mainline Protestant ministry, for example, was considered equal to the call to the law or to medicine. Across the board, in other words, the ministry no longer has the status that once made it a privileged profession in the United States. Go to any seminary of any stripe and they will tell you—if they are honest—that they are not getting the caliber of recruits that they once did. But then maybe this is the way it ought to be. Peter the fisherman, we are told in the New Testament, was no great catch. This, then, is the wider context in which the priest shortage ought to be studied. The issue is not just quantity but quality. And, by the way, I know, from all the time I have spent in Rome, that the Vatican is suffering from the same ailment.

Second, the laity. We know from studies that the American Catholic laity are among the best-educated people in the country. They have impressive numbers in Congress and in statehouses. They are no longer strangers to corporate boardrooms. The barriers are down. Catholics are influential and affluent. But we also know from studies that they are not generous in their financial support of the church. After a generation or two in the suburbs, they are abandoning parish schools and high schools—the very institutions which, to my mind, have been among the most important achievements of the Catholic church in the United States.

My word to those who trumpet the future as the age of the laity is: Be careful, you may get what you wish. Last year, a group of political scientists sought to identify not only those Americans who say they are Catholic, Protestant, and so on, but—what is more daring—to measure levels of commitment. By their analysis, Roman Catholics comprise 23 percent of the population. But if you ask how many meet the most minimal standards of commitment, we find we are dealing with a mere 10 million Americans, or 4 percent of the population.

Worse, I would say that American Catholics born in the sixties are, as a group, severely disadvantaged. They grew up at a time of immense confusion, inside and outside the church, and as a result, little of the wisdom of the church was passed on to them. Like other Americans their age, they have become ad hoc in their religious commitments: that is, they take what interests and pleases them and ignore the rest. They relish their Catholic identity chiefly as a thin membrane against social anomie, something to stuff in the stocking of an otherwise undifferentiated self.

Again, this is not just a Catholic problem. But identity means nothing if it does not imply the development of character—distinctive habits of the heart, of the mind, and of the will—disciplined habits of doing and of being by which we come to define ourselves and others come to know who we are.

Across the country Americans are telling politicians that they are concerned about values. This is not just Dan Quayle talking himself into a run for the Republican nomination but parents who find they cannot raise their children the way they themselves were raised. Character is formed by communities and their institutions. In a society like ours, the core institutions that form character are the family, the neighborhood, the schools, and religious organizations. That's why we call them mediating institutions: government and society at large can't



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

inculcate character, though they can reward the exercise of virtue. And all three core institutions are in serious trouble, fading in saliency and significance. Indeed, by almost every measure American society is worse off than it was a generation ago when Harvey Cox invited us to celebrate the secular city. The city is indeed secular and in need of a vital Christian presence, not just Christians who exhibit their Catholic identity as if it were a designer label.

One often hears among educated Catholics the phrase "the institutional church" used as a term of derision. How very American—and, sociologically, how naive—to suppose that anything of value can survive without institutions. The early Christians would never have begotten a second-generation church if the charismatic first generation did not develop institutions, chains of command, and eventually a hierarchy. Of course, the church is more than the sum of its institutions. But no society can survive without institutions, which are not just buildings or chains of command but also patterns of behavior. It is only through institutions that traditions are passed on, the young brought up, the undisciplined disciplined, and society sustained—including that society we call the church.

I have done my share of institutional criticism. There isn't a religious group, I suppose, that I haven't offended. But what offends me is the romantic notion that all the ills of the church reside with the institution—so that only if we could reform it, we ourselves would be better Christians. The truth quite often is the other way around.

Consider some of the basic institutions of the Catholic church and ask what role the laity have in relationship to them. First, the parish. One often hears or reads that the parish is what counts among Catholics. The pope is a distant figure, the bishop a corporation executive, etc. According to this refrain, the parish priest is the face the church wears for most Catholics. Indeed, some folks, like Jesuit theologian Avery Dulles, worry about creeping congregationalism in the Catholic church.

By temperament, I am not congregationalist. I confess I think of the parish as a place to go on Sundays to be with people I'd rather not be with the rest of the week. I much prefer attending Mass at a cathedral, especially during the week, where I don't know anyone and few people are like me or share my particular and peculiar world. I like the feel I get of the diversity and catholicity that comes with that experience.

Now when I say that I think of the parish as a place to be with people I'd rather not be with the rest of the week, I am NOT being as snobbish as that may sound. There is an impersonal character to the liturgy that I think is essential to its meaning and movement and that I hope even guitars and folk songs cannot altogether destroy.

Let me add a sociological observation. I think most Protestants are much better at creating community than Catholics, who think they own the patent on the term. In part, that's because Protestants consider the church to be primarily local in nature. So the paradox is that although Protestants are identified with religious individualism they are better at creating communities than the Catholics who believe that grace is mediated through sacraments which are communal. Sociologically, the Catholic parish, except in fresh ethnic communities, is a walk-in, drive-in facility where individuals can attend a Mass. Maybe the reason Catholics talk so much about community is because they experience so little of it, especially when there is no parish school to create ongoing parental interest. Moreover, the parish is structured mainly to nurture the young and succor the elderly.

But there is more to Christianity than nurture and for that "more" the parish is a poor vehicle. Again, let's step outside the Catholic world. One of the major trends in American Christianity these past two decades has been the development of megachurches with as many as 30,000 members. One finds

Leonard Kress

## Shotputters and Discus Throwers

*And if a person does not care*
*to transfer those terms that he learned*
*from lower and less worthy things*
*to those sublime entities...*
*Saint Augustine*

Cut down to size by distance, always consigned
for everybody's safety to outer fields
far from hurdlers, sprinters, vaulters, quarter-
milers who—unlike us who put
the shot or spin the discus—disavow
the soul's existence. Why else would they push
their trimmed and sinewy corporeality

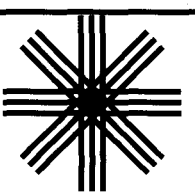
against the grade-school lesson of parables?
But we so mired by the bulk of flesh
and muscle, forgoing assembly honors
and applause to bow and crouch inside
the lime-drawn circle that circumscribes
our earthly life—we know that everything
is only practice, imperfect imitation

of training loops eternally projected
in locker rooms of the mind. For as
the discus thrower pivots, triply, hugging
the limits of his circle, as conscious of
his former fouls, his current propensity
as Augustine—he knows it is the finger's
final flick that makes the discus soar,

all else just preparation. Just as the grunting
shotputter knows, eyeing the sad arc
of the cast iron ball, heavy and black as a soul
full of the charred ballast of neophyte
desire, that oafish humility and not
swift grace is a proper stance for heaving *that weight*
*without weight, above all things that can be measured.*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



## THE GRAYMOOR PRIZE

The Friars of the Atonement announce the fifth annual Graymoor Prize, to be awarded for the best essay on any aspect of ecumenical or interreligious affairs. Original and unpublished essays of approximately 2,500-4,000 words should be submitted to the editors of COMMONWEAL. The winning essay will receive a prize of $1,000 and will be published in COMMONWEAL.

Deadline: October 3, 1994. Announcement of Prize: December 16, 1994. The prize-winning essay will be published in COMMONWEAL's January 13, 1995, issue. This essay will become the property of the Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute. All other essays will be returned to their authors after January 1.

**COMMONWEAL**
15 Dutch Street, New York, NY 10038


them especially among the evangelicals, and especially in the South and Southwest. The basic model is the mall. These churches have a ministry for every age group, several choirs, diverse Bible study groups, and not just a baseball team but entire athletic leagues made up solely of church members. These churches come equipped with huge parking lots, fleets of buses, day-care centers, and literally hundreds of twelve-step groups offering therapy for alcoholics, chocoholics, the drug addicted, ex-smokers, the co-dependent, the overweight, the anorexic, the sexually harassed, the gender confused, the undersexed, women's support groups, men's support groups, teen-age support groups, and support groups for, yes, those who have become dependent on support groups. In other words, these churches are beginning to resemble self-sufficient, "tribal" compounds—places where, above all, your needs are met. Now, I don't know about you, but when anyone tells me they are here to meet my needs, I look for the nearest exit. We are witnessing the arrival of what twenty years ago the sociologist Philip Reiff called "the triumph of the therapeutic."

I trust the future of Catholicism does not lie in that direction. But that is the direction in which much of American religion is headed. Indeed, much of American culture and politics, too. Now it may make sense, from an evangelical Protestant perspective, to transform the local church into a free-standing quasi-denomination, but I do not think that makes sense for Roman Catholics—or for most other Christians. To be sure, Catholic parishes could use some reforms. For years I've argued for two innovations in particular. One would be to hand out pew report cards so the congregation can grade the sermon (or better, give the sermon first, as they do in China, and see how many people show up on time).

The second would be to make confirmation more than a meaningless rite of passage by actually conferring real parish responsibilities—like painting the homes of widows—on the aspiring Christian adult. Bringing into the parish some adult education in religion also seems both laudable and necessary.

But the larger problem is obvious. If Catholics want a vibrant parish life, lay people will have to make it happen. Religious orders of women, who have been the unheralded strength of the church in schools, parishes, and hospitals, are dying out. Are lay people willing to make the sacrifices necessary to take on those responsibilities? The prospect is not good.

The problems facing the diocesan priesthood, it seems to me, are the maintenance of a sense of professionalism and of morale. The priesthood cannot be reduced to sacerdotal acts, with the rest of their responsibilities taken up by the laity. Indeed, I worry more about the laity trying to relegate priests to figurehead status than I worry about priests lording it over the laity. Unless there is a rise in religious vocations—unless, that is, the gospel's evangelical counsels are encouraged and inspired by lay people in their homes—we are all in line for a very cold shower.

At the other end of the institutional spectrum is the Vatican and its sovereign, the pope. Now I have spent long days and nights at the Vatican, especially when I was studying the Congregation for the Causes of Saints for my last book. I think I recognize the Vatican's quirky culture. Quirks are what make it interesting: it is the last Renaissance court. It is worth recalling that once laymen could be cardinals; one of them was even second-in-command as a sort of prime minister. But I wouldn't recommend applying for a Vatican job today: the pay is bad and the status is worse than that of civilians who work in the military. Besides there are no more lay cardinals. My hunch is that what makes the Vatican work as well as it does is its male, celibate clergy. And I want it to work. Again, let's consider the alternatives.

The truth is, there aren't any. Internationally speaking, the Vatican is the only religious game in town. Despite its many faults, the Vatican at least provides the church with a center in which the many cultural expressions of Catholicism meet and conflict, as at a crossroads. Having a center is what gives the Roman church a semblance of coherence.

My hopes for the future of the Holy See are these. If it is to be truly a crossroads of cultures it will have to make room for a wider range of voices for the pope and his curia to hear. None of the church's valued hierarchical structure would be endangered by more forums for consultation. I'd like to see periodic synods of lay men and women—meeting sometimes separately as well as together—to advise the pope. I must say this is a hope against hope because the synods of bishops we already have are not as open or frank as they ought to be. That is, they are much too often purged of unwanted opinions in advance to give a false sense of unanimity. But just because bishops do not feel free to speak candidly in a synod, that doesn't mean



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

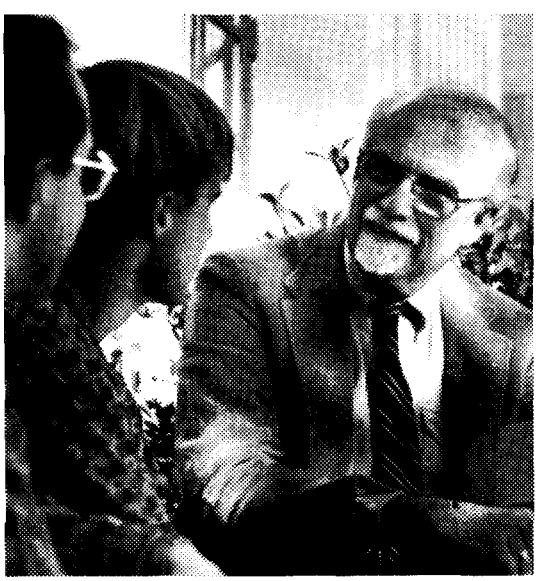
the laity will be so timid.

In the Catholic scheme of things, the parish and the Vatican fortunately do not exhaust the forms of Christian belonging, connection, or initiative. As a practical matter, it seems to me that the diocese is the most underappreciated and underutilized ecclesiastical unit. It is only on that wider, city and civic level that there is enough room for those lay Catholics who are eager to give public expression to their Christian commitments and convictions. For example, one of the most interesting initiatives today is the Chicago-based Business Executives for Economic Justice. I like four things about it. First, it adds white to the church's historic identification with blue-collar concerns. Second, its practicality: it deals with difficult, specific issues that crop up within the world of business and corporate decision making, a world which is not known for fine moral discriminations. Third, while it grows out of a Catholic social ethic, it is interfaith. Fourth, it needs no ecclesiastical sanction: it is lay initiative at its best.

What worries me, though, is whether such groups are capable of recruiting younger Catholic men and women in business and the professions. The men I know through its publication, *Hard Choices*, are all of a generation that gained a strong sense of mission through assorted organizations that existed in the vigorous Catholic culture of the '40s, '50s, and early '60s. Such bonding hardly exists any more. So the real task of the Catholic laity is to find a way to initiate the young who were reared in the bland and narcissistic '70s and '80s into the wider vision of what it means to be Catholic in business, the professions, unions, and yes, in the worlds of the arts and communication.

I really am not much interested in whether the laity take on ecclesiastical chores. Though some must, I hope their numbers are limited. American Catholics came of age long ago as members of the church. The laity I most admire have little time for intrachurch squabbles and petty turf fights. Their aim should be to confront a culture and a society that is sagging under problems, drunk on a vapid popular culture, threatened in its core institutions, and pleading for moral direction. Catholics have much to contribute, but their contribution must be wise, principled, creative, and where called for, critical and confrontational. On the issue of abortion, among many other issues, Catholics must realize that they are called to defend, wisely but firmly, the innocents that a self-indulgent, utilitarian society willingly and routinely destroys.

There are, as I see it, three areas where Catholic lay initiative is important. The first is education. At my own high school in Cleveland, Saint Ignatius, I have seen how successfully the Jesuit call to mission in education has been transferred to and enriched by lay teachers and administrators. I think secondary education is the most critical place for the church to focus its energies. Further, the laity as parents, alumni, and benefactors can and must make their voices heard in the great debate, now

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

# Ph.D. programs in Christian Ethics and New Testament & Early Christianity

Two programs for full-time students which draw on the distinctive resources of the Roman Catholic theological tradition.

- Financial assistance available.
- Application deadline February 1st.

For more information, write to:

Director of Graduate Programs
Department of Theology
Loyola University Chicago
6525 N. Sheridan Road
Chicago, IL 60626
312-508-2353




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

underway, over the Catholic identity of Catholic colleges and universities. Don't leave the debate to the specialists alone, or to the Vatican. After all, lay Catholics pay the bills and if they don't demand from these schools sound and quality religious education then we are wasting our money.

Second, politics. Catholics have a rich store of theory and practical wisdom with regard to the common good. It needn't and shouldn't be applied in a partisan way. But it should be heard—and labeled—as Catholic. Why leave that role to the bishops? But there are dangers for lay initiative in the political realm. Recently, for instance, I attended a meeting of a new national group called "The Catholic Campaign for America" in New York City. Cardinal John O'Connor presided and Congressman Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) was the honored guest. The entire evening was devoted to blatant political proselytizing, with abortion used as the rallying issue for securing a Catholic blessing on a narrow economic and partisan agenda. That's not Catholic. Yes, the Democratic party has, in my judgment, deeply offended its once loyal Catholic constituency—go along or go away has been its policy on abortion and related family issues. But there is a real danger that because of this one issue some leaders of the church are open to political manipulation. Lay Catholics who oppose abortion ought to be careful that politicians do not use them, even as they ought to reject the self-serving apologias of politicians like Mario Cuomo.

The third area is the media. Most official Catholic journalism is fourth-rate and there simply is no reason for all these mediocre diocesan newspapers to exist, despite some quality efforts here and there. And much of what one finds in our two or three national Catholic newspapers is devoted to intrachurch squabbles and ecclesiastical gossip. For better or worse, the national media is our public square, and if the church is to wear a public face then it must be present in that square. Catholics have at least two fine magazines that speak to public issues in a balanced, professional way: *Commonweal* and *America*. But the first has only 18,000 subscribers, the other about 36,000. That is a scandal. The church is, among other things, a community of discourse. And if the other 50 million American Catholics cannot find time to enter and support that discourse, then one has to conclude that the vast majority of presumably educated Catholics simply don't care about the future of the church in its relations with society, politics, and culture.

Admittedly, much of the media is in thrall to a puerile popular culture. Much of our music, most of our entertainment—including sports—is crude, ephemeral, commercial, and bland. More than the world of work, our world of leisure needs transformation through a reappropriation of the authentic Catholic tradition of Christian celebration and joy in creation. That requires acts of reporting, analysis, and perception, and a husbanding of language that is any culture's sinew and gift. Above all, it requires imagination to enter worlds not our own. The church's great gift to all of us is our Catholic imagination. Because of its sacramental sensibility, because it looks for Christ in all and all in Christ, because it seeks to embrace the whole—things seen as well as unseen, as Saint Paul tells us—the Catholic imagination should never be sectarian, exclusive, parochial, Puritanical, or reticent. It should be critical, hopeful, empathetic—and, above all, playful. Dante, a layman, is to me the patron saint of the Catholic imagination. And when we try to imagine the future of the church, we would all do well to remember that life is, for all its disappointments, suffering, and moral absurdities, a Divine Comedy. □

## ART

# TREASURES ON EARTH

## ARMENIAN ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS

Thematically, there are many ways to approach "Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts," which appeared through early August at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York and is now on view at the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore. And each of them brings us to a better understanding of Armenian Christian art from the eleventh to the seventeenth centuries. During that period Armenia was regularly under siege or at war with its neighbors, as it is now, and this sad parallel casts a political shadow over the books, bindings, and vellum pages exhibited here in calm repose.

Thanks to its artists, Armenia's national culture came to be identified with the development of the "Gospel Book." (The curators' account of Armenia as a nation of bibliophiles made the exhibit seem right at home in the mansion of J.P. Morgan, the boldest book lover our own nation will ever see.) In conflict with Turks and Mongols and in touch with the Christian West, Armenians were compelled to at once absorb Islamic and Western influences and to forge them into an inviolable

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Armenian identity. In "Treasures in Heaven," Armenia's multicultural implications are drawn out with subtlety and grace. In the viewing these themes are so closely joined as to be indistinguishable: politics prompts a mingling of cultures, which is reflected in the books themselves. This is most clearly evident in the work of the thirteenth-century illustrator, T'oros Roslin. Armenians translated Scripture and the liturgy from Greek and Syriac into their own language soon after converting to Christianity in the fourth century, and Armenian *notragir* script is prominent in Roslin's brilliant canon tables (thematic indices of the Gospels), eight of which are on view. At the same time, the tables' intricately patterned borders reflect the influence of Islamic abstraction. The delicately modeled features of Mary in another work by Roslin, *Presentation in the Temple*, reveal the effects of Western Christian art, encountered when Armenians migrated to Cilicia after a prolonged Turkish invasion.

Important as these themes are, I found it more rewarding to ignore some of the expert commentary in order to focus on each illumination's essential structure, or iconography. Again and again in "Treasures in Heaven," one comes across whole scenes, or ways of presenting scenes, that appear to diverge sharply from the traditions of manuscript illumination in the Latin church of the period. Whether or not these scenes are unique to the Armenian church, they are uncommon enough to make the exhibit feel like a first encounter in art with key aspects of the Christian tradition.

The thirty-eight pages of the *Gladzor Gospels* on exhibit, while presenting the tradition of the Gospel Book, also reveal the rich and strange stresses put on the life of Christ by Armenian artists. Used and venerated in the liturgy, an Armenian Gospel Book included canon tables, scenes from the life of Christ, and portraits of the evangelists, as well as a portrait of the donor or benefactor of the manuscript. The *Gladzor Gospels'* scenes from the life of Christ, illuminated by five artists, are remarkable. On some pages the artists depict familiar scenes, but arrange them quite differently than was done in the West. For example, in the *Beheading of John the Baptist*, the guests at Herod's table are joined by a pair of beasts. The Last Supper is depicted as if viewed from the ceiling, so the Apostles' heads are arrayed around the table; Judas, shown in jutting profile, thrusts his hand toward the dish, while Jesus lies spread out on a table top (like a lamb, the tag notes). In an image of a post-Resurrection appearance of Jesus on the Sea of Galilee, the Apostles draw up their nets while a chalice and a single fish hover in the evening sky, as if in a Chagall painting.

Other leaves depict scenes from the life of Christ that, to my knowledge, were depicted rarely in the Western art of the period. Peter warms his hands at a roaring fire while a maidservant stands by (*Peter's Denial*). As Lazarus is raised, an attendant pinches his nose against the stench of death. In a Last Judgment scene, blue angels descend toward a barren landscape while, below ground, the dead, in rows of plain coffins, bend forward, being raised at last. These images seem unique, yet they also seem to have iconic tradition behind them.

Images from the Armenian folk-art tradition and the later Armenian diaspora (to present-day Iran, India, and elsewhere) are even stranger, in part because they are based on points of doctrine rather than incidents from the Scriptures proper. If the *Gladzor Gospels* anticipate Caravaggio, these resemble posters from the heyday of Haight-Ashbury in the 1960s—bold, lurid, trembling, obsessed with death. There's a *Harrowing of Hell* in which Christ reaches across a snaky divide to Adam while smashing Satan's skull with the butt of the cross, and a *Last Judgment* in which Christ embraces Peter and Paul while flames advance toward the damned. In an *Ascension*, Christ sports a giant halo in a rainbow of colors; in a Gospel Book portrait, John the Evangelist is surrounded by a corona of energy, a spiritual oil slick. While "Treasures in Heaven" reveals a distinctive Armenian culture, its strongest impression is of the culture Armenia has historically shared with the West.

As they give pleasure through their ingenuity, these images on exhibit revive senses that have been dulled by too many variants of the Virgin and Child, reminding the viewer of manuscript art's ability to sound out hidden depths of the Christian tradition. One comes away delighted, and illuminated. PAUL ELIE

*Paul Elie is a frequent* Commonweal *contributor.*

## MEDIA

# GO AHEAD, TAKE A PEEK

## FOX'S 'X-FILES'

Let us now praise the Fox Network.

TV, as its most Cromwellian critics never tire to tell us, is debased, popular entertainment out to make the fastest possible buck by pandering to the most vulgar possible mass tastes. The same charge of whoredom has been brought, at various times, against the Hollywood film, the Victorian novel, and Elizabethan drama. But I am by now tired of refuting the Cromwellians: they never, bless their pointy little heads, listen anyway. The mass-cult imagination, as history teaches us, is a much more fertile soil for art than the hydroponic gardens of "refined" taste. And the good folks at Fox—as shamelessly and exuberantly profit-driven and pandering as Shakespeare, Mozart, or Balanchine—have, in a few short years, raised the medium to a level of vulgarity *and* magnificence, stupidity *and* perspicuity, that it never enjoyed during the long domination of the three big, over-the-air networks.

It was the cable revolution that made the upstart Fox thinkable, because the advent of cable broke the stranglehold of ABC, CBS, and NBC on the available transmission-bands. You can analogize this change to the wedding, in the early nineteenth century, of the printing press and the steam engine: suddenly *everybody* could publish books in great quantities, and that pop-cult monster, the Victorian novel, was born. Now there are Christian channels, occult channels, gay channels, anti-gay (morose?) channels, cooking channels, *und so weiter*. (My own fantasy is a TV-Anon channel: twenty-four hours of white noise



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# LAST CHANCE!

**COMMONWEAL**
RELIGION & THE MEDIA

Commonweal Forums'
**WAR OF THE WORLDVIEWS?**

Religion & the Media,
one of America's most neuralgic issues,
gets close scrutiny in
**Washington, D.C., Tuesday, September 13**
**Georgetown University**
**37th and O Streets, N.W.**
**Bunn Intercultural Center**
**1 to 4:15 P.M. (Reception to follow)**

*Keynote Speaker*
**E.J. DIONNE, JR.,** *Washington Post*

*Panel*
**TIM RUSSERT,** *NBC News, Moderator*
**COKIE ROBERTS,** *ABC News*
**TERRY EASTLAND,** *Forbes Media Critic*
**HELEN ALVARE,** *USCC*
**JOHN DART,** *Los Angeles Times*
plus invited respondents and audience discussion

The Forum is open to the public.
**Registration fee: $20.**

Georgetown University is cosponsor of the Washington gathering. The project is supported through grants from the Catholic Communication Campaign and from the Commonweal Foundation.

**To follow: Forum in**
**New York, Tuesday, October 25**
Fordham University
For further information, please phone
212-732-0800.
Space limited. Please register in advance.

**COMMONWEAL Religion & the Media Forum**
**15 Dutch St., Room 502, New York, NY 10038-3760**

☐ Check enclosed ($20) ☐ Bill me

Name _____
Organization _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____

W 9/9/94


for viewers in withdrawal—maybe with New Age music on the soundtrack.)

But if the technology made Fox possible, it was only genius that could make it actual.

I've said before that the novel is a writer's medium, film a director's medium, and TV a producer's medium. They are all simply—in the phrase of that brilliant man, Neil Gaiman—"machines for telling stories." At each stage of complexity-of-production, though, the machine demands more elaborate maintenance; so we think of Dickens's novels, Hitchcock's films, and Bochco's series.

Given the cable revolution, Fox trusted the innate *kinkiness* of mass-cult taste, while the Big Three continued to bank on its glacial conservatism. (It's happened before: in 1954 RCA bought Elvis from Sun Records and changed history.) By and large, Fox didn't do more "Charlie's Angels" or more variations on "Diff'rent Strokes": they did counterprogramming, betting imaginatively on the imagination of the American viewer. And they won.

Not that this is a deification of Fox. The network that gave us "In Living Color" has to spend some time in Dante's Purgatory; and the one that gave us "Married...with Children" has got to send at least *somebody* to his Inferno (Eighth Circle, I figure—the Fraudulent and Malicious). But as that major aesthetician Mel Brooks says, "Listen: Art has nothing to do with good taste" (the man who wrote both the sublime *Lear* and the godawful *Timon of Athens* would have agreed). Who else but the folks with guts enough to roll the dice on "Married" would *also* have the guts to roll them on "The Simpsons," "The Adventures of Briscoe County, Jr.," or on buying up the rights to HBO's wonderfully grand-guignol "Tales from the Crypt"? And then, of course, there's "Beverly Hills 90210," or, as I think of it, "Gidget Gets an Abortion." Uptight exiled-to-California Chicagoan that I am, I just can't watch it for a whole episode. But neither can I deny that it's brilliant and honest and—a word that for me carries a truckload of admiration—charitable. The imaginative failure is mine, not the show's.

And then there is—there are?—"The X-Files," and that's mainly what I wanted to talk to you about.

TV, let's face facts, has never done horror very well. Science fiction, sure; the grotesque, as in "Twilight Zone," of course; and the gnarly/violent, *oi vey!* But not horror. And here's why. Because TV wants to *show* you things, and real horror, as Poe knew and Clive Barker knows, is not what you see but *what you're afraid you might have to see in a minute*. It's when—remember when you were six?—you had to, but didn't want to, peek over the edge of the blanket. And that moment before you did peek: that's the moment of horror.

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE. That legend appears at the beginning of every "X-Files," and its promise-threat is just the stuff of the blanket-moment.

Here's the setup. F.B.I. Agent Fox Mulder (David Duchovny)—yes, dammit, the first name is a dumb pun—is obsessed with the fact that his sister, when they were both children, was abducted by a UFO. To the dismay of his superiors in the Bureau, he spends most of his time running down cases of the extrater-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

restrial, the paranormal, or the unnatural that the Bureau itself has junked under the presumably lunatic category of the "X" Files. He has been assigned an assistant, Agent Dana Sculley (Gillian Anderson), a good hard-headed skeptic, whose job is as much to ride herd on Mulder's perceived dottiness as actually help him. UFOs, demonic possession, gender-switching alien invaders—each week Mulder attempts to track down another eruption of the uncanny, and each week, naturally, the sensible Sculley insists to him that there is a perfectly reasonable explanation for the events he thinks so ominous—until, again naturally, the last ten minutes, when the uncanny is shown to be *there*.

Formulaic? Right: like about 90 percent of all the stories we've ever bothered to enjoy. At one level, "X-Files" has all the subtlety of those headlines in the tabloids ("Aliens Clone Hitler's Child!") that you wish—confess, now—you could peruse in full, if only the guy ahead of you had fourteen more frozen dinners to check out.

At another level, though, it draws upon what Harold Bloom used to call our debased, but still authentic, yearning for the sublime; our sense that even absurdities like sentient octopi from Planet Zord or three-headed, telepathic calves are somehow, though false, more real than the mundane, infinitely recurative commonplaces of "The World According to Benjamin Franklin." For these things are of what the Middle Ages called, beautifully, *faerie*: not "fairyland" in the cuddly Disneyesque sense, but the truly and fearfully *strange*, out of which gods and demons—and humanity—are born.

For its first season, at least, "X-Files" proved last year to be one of the very closest approaches TV has made to the shiver of confronting *faerie*. The dialogue was crisp and wryly literate; the pacing was brilliant; and the camera work, virtually without distracting special effects, was as good as—and derivative from—the best work of Spielberg (*Close Encounters*) or John Carpenter (*Halloween*). But the stunning goodness of the show was in the original concept of executive producer Chris Carter.

The ghost-hunter in "X-Files" is not the occult Dr. Van Helsing-type of the Dracula myth, but the squeaky-clean Agent Mulder of the computer-dominated F.B.I. It's impossible, for me at least, not to read Mulder's position as a parable about Religious Man in the Age of Perfect Information. For all the transformation of the world into pure data, Mulder still feels the terror and allure of the world as Mystery, a visionary trapped in the infonet. And Sculley, the careerist/rationalist, finds herself increasingly drawn into Mulder's universe. By season's end, Sculley had joined Mulder in his sense that "The Truth Is Out There"—at the risk of both their careers in the Bureau.

The second season, which begins later this month, will be fascinating to watch, just to see if the show can maintain its very wise balance between the mundane and the uncanny. I hope it will, because this is some of the very best storytelling on the Tube these days.

Would I lie to you? Come on, some of you have even learned to like "NYPD Blue." This fall, watch "The X-Files."

FRANK McCONNELL


**FINAL FORUM!**

**COMMONWEAL**
RELIGION & THE MEDIA

Commonweal Forums
**WAR OF THE WORLDVIEWS?**

Religion & the Media,
one of America's most neuralgic issues,
gets close scrutiny in
**New York, N.Y., Tuesday, October 25**
**Fordham University**
**Lincoln Center Campus**
**113 West 60th Street**
**McNally Ampitheatre**
**1 to 4:15 P.M. (Reception to follow)**

***Keynote Speaker***
**PETER STEINFELS,** *New York Times*

***Panel***
**JUDITH H. BANKI,** *Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Foundation, Moderator*
**WILLIAM F. BAKER,** *Thirteen/WNET*
**RANDALL BALMER,** *Columbia University*
**JOHN LEO,** *U.S. News & World Report*
**MARY ALICE WILLIAMS,** *Ice Blue Productions*
plus invited respondents and audience discussion

The Forum is open to the public.
**Registration fee: $20.**
Fordham University is cosponsor of the New York gathering. The project is supported through grants from the Catholic Communication Campaign and from the Commonweal Foundation.

For further information, please phone 212-732-0800.
Space limited. Please register in advance.

**COMMONWEAL Religion & the Media Forum**
**15 Dutch St., Room 502, New York, NY 10038-3760**

☐ Check enclosed ($20) ☐ Bill me

Name
Organization
Address
City, State, Zip

N 9/9/94




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Traffic jam on the spiritual superhighway

DENNIS M. DOYLE

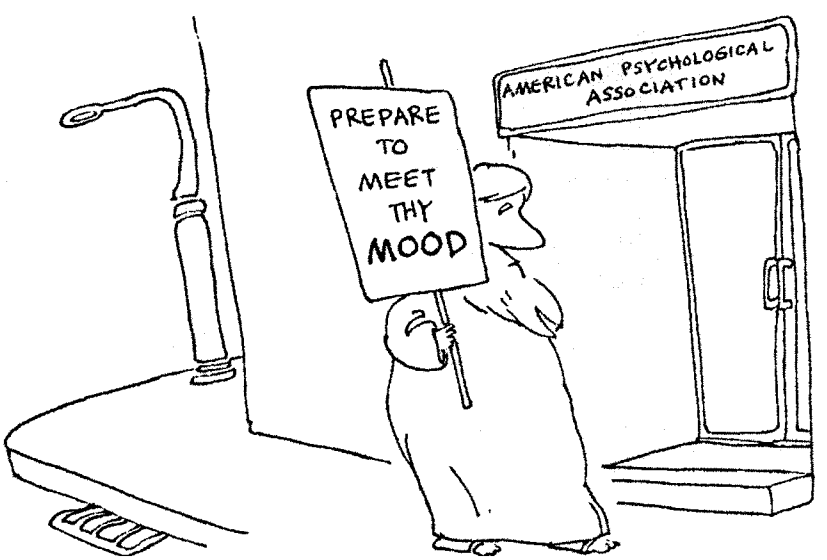
Recently, I had a lively conversation with a young, bright, confident theology student, the sort of student I might expect one day to explain the mystery of the Trinity after having demanded and been granted an interview with all three Persons. When I mentioned a popular contemporary spiritual writer to her, however, suddenly this critically minded student's demeanor changed: she became hushed and almost reverential. When I asked her why she was so taken with this particular author's thought, she became uncharacteristically inarticulate, finally mumbling something in general about "self-awareness."

Like this student, many well-educated lay Catholics in the United States today are looking beyond the classroom and the pulpit for spiritual and religious sustenance. And in growing numbers they have been seeking it in their local bookstores, in the works of such mega-selling authors as M. Scott Peck, Marianne Williamson, Thomas Moore, John Bradshaw, and Joseph Girzone. These authors might feel uncomfortable being lumped together, but their similarities abound. The primary discipline underlying most of their books is psychology. All have been influenced by Carl Jung and/or the twelve-step programs associated with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). All criticize traditional approaches to therapy that ignore a person's spiritual life, and several even proclaim a celestial marriage between psychology and spirituality. For the most part these authors: (1) stress that the life-journey is an ongoing process that poses difficult problems without easy answers; (2) distinguish sharply between the ego (the smaller or narcissistic self) and the soul (the larger self); (3) encourage people to be self-reliant in their spirituality and to take personal responsibility; (4) yet also encourage people to rely ultimately on God or a higher power; (5) make some type of distinction between spirituality and formal religion, extolling the former while either criticizing or patronizing the latter; and (6) assure people that everything is ultimately O.K., and that although life can be tough, anyone who takes personal responsibility can live meaningfully and well.

These interlocking themes, including the need to be vigilant against abuses of religious authority and religiosity, are not incompatible with Catholicism. The key theme of abandonment to divine providence is certainly a traditional one for Catholics, as are the mystery of suffering, the sanctity of the individual conscience, and the importance of growth in virtue. It is the variations on these themes that require a critical eye. Thus, each of these authors' packaging of spirituality calls for individual assessment as well as for reading suggestions to balance off their limitations.

**M. Scott Peck** Though not without its own precedents (such as the works of Erich Fromm, Rollo May, Victor Frankl), M. Scott Peck's *The Road Less Traveled* (Simon and Schuster, 1978) was the first and is still the most read among the present-day best sellers. Some of its appeal comes from the author's confident, authoritative tone as he sorts through life's deepest mysteries. Even more of its appeal comes from the many narrative-analytical vignettes about his patients' lives (the names and details have been changed to protect the guilt-ridden). Peck has every justifiable reason imaginable to use the stories that he does. A voyeuristic element, however, is undeniable.

Yet psychological guidance remains the heart of the book. Peck offers a common-sense package of psychoanalytic theories that allow one to discover whether one tends more toward neurosis or toward a character disorder, or both. The reader comes to understand transference, ego-boundaries, psychosomatic disorders, and a host of other terms. Peck challenges head-on those psychological approaches that are self-esteem-centered, determinist, ration-




DENNIS M. DOYLE *teaches ecclesiology at the University of Dayton. He is the author of* The Church Emerging from Vatican II *(Twenty-Third Publications).*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

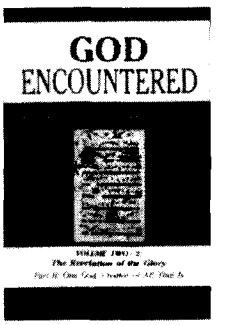
alist, or reductionist. I suspect that some people who truly need to see a therapist have sought one out because of this book.

Peck wrote *The Road Less Traveled* strictly from his point of view as a psychiatrist. Since that time he has given up his therapy practice, been baptized a Christian (nondenominationally), and has established an organization, the Foundation for Community Encouragement, which runs three-day seminars for corporations and other groups seeking to achieve a deeper sense of community. Although he draws the principles for these seminars from a variety of sources, a major source is AA. He explains that he wants "to teach people how to get into community without having to be an alcoholic first, without having to have a crisis first." The key virtue that underlies Peck's approach to spirituality is "civility," which he defines in AA-style as "consciously motivated organizational behavior that is ethical in submission to a Higher Power."

Whereas in his first book Peck stood outside of religion while singing its praises, in his more recent works (*A World Waiting to Be Born*, Bantam Books, 1993; *Further Along the Road Less Traveled*, Simon and Schuster, 1993) he speaks as a Christian. He testifies to his own experience of reading the Gospels and of falling in love with Jesus. He is not afraid to say that he became a Christian because he "came to believe that, on the whole, Christian doctrine approaches the reality of God and reality in general more closely than the other great religions." Peck himself advises us always to examine things critically by asking, *what is missing?* From a Catholic standpoint, missing in Peck is any acknowledgment that for at least two decades the churches have already been engaged in serious community-building, as for example base communities, faith-sharing groups, lay ministries, and the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults. Missing is respect for a few clear rules: one does not have to be an avid fan of John Paul II's *Veritatis splendor* to be rattled when Peck says sweepingly that "it is possible for premarital or extramarital sex to be quite chaste." Most of all, missing from Peck is any sense of sacramental appreciation. Beyond discussing his own baptism, he says little else of rituals other than to warn us not to confuse them with reality. His own nondenominationalism reveals an abstract, generic version of Christianity.

Peck's work in community-building fits well with the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, which demands that social problems be addressed through the most local of solutions. The activity most proper to social justice is forming groups, such as labor unions and base communities, to work for change. But missing from Peck is the Catholic insistence on engaging also in a deeper social analysis, one that critiques the larger political and economic structures on a national and global level. For example, though he claims to be launching the cure for society and the whole world, Peck offers no critique of the excesses of such phenomena as class exploitation or the consumerist mentality. This is a considerable lacuna for someone with such utopian ambitions, since at least some people *are* in part the victims of social forces that lie outside their control. I believe that what Peck is doing is of enormous value, but I recommend Thomas Merton's *Conjectures of*


NEW BOOKS
FALL



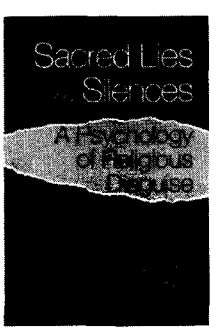

**God Encountered**
**A Contemporary Catholic Systematic Theology**
*Frans Jozef van Beeck, S.J.*
As impressive for its generous spirit and its breadth of vision as it is for its sound scholarship, this series presents a theological system in the catholic tradition that is superbly organized and clearly articulated. The system as a whole is geared especially to seminarians, pastoral ministers and priests, graduate students, and scholars in the field. At the same time, the individual installments offer internally coherent treatments of the various aspects of the Christian understanding of humanity's encounter with God; consequently, they may be read independent of each other.
The projected three-volume series appears in six installments: *Volume One* is currently available. *Volume Two* is being written and when finished will comprise four separate books, two of which are now in print and available. *Volume Three* will follow.

**Volume One: Understanding the Christian Faith**
**5517-3 Hardcover, 354 pp., 6 x 9, $27.95**

**Volume Two/1: The Revelation of the Glory—Introduction and Part 1: Fundamental Theology**
**5498-3 Paper, 382 pp., 6 x 9, $19.95**

**Volume Two/2: The Revelation of the Glory—Part 2: One God, Creator of All That Is**
**5499-1 Paper, 216 pp., 6 x 9, $14.95**

*". . . the achievement of Frans Jozef van Beeck is simply outstanding. . . . in many ways he is the Rubens of contemporary theology: working on a vast canvas, his work exhibits superb organization, but often arrests with vivid detail."*
*Robert P. Imbelli,* Commonweal




**Sacred Lies and Silences: A Psychology of Religious Disguise** *Vernon Ruland, S.J.*
What causes some people to hide behind a guise of religiosity? In contrast, what depths of spirituality can dwell in people under the guise of "conscience" or "magic"?
Sorting through religious disguises such as conscience, magic, ghosts, irreligiousness, as well as paranoia, self-effacement, religious co-dependency, and narcissism, this work sifts out a balanced spiritual ideal and a predictable range of distortion, both psychological and religious, triggered whenever this integration is threatened. The case studies add a rich variety and interest to this work and are drawn from the author's counseling, teaching, and pastoral experiences, and his research in comparative religious traditions.
**5847-4 Paper, 168 pp., 6 x 9, $10.95**

Available from your religious bookstore or
THE LITURGICAL PRESS
P.O. Box 7500, Collegeville, MN 56321-7500
Order Toll Free: Phone 1-800-858-5450 • Fax 1-800-445-5899




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*a Guilty Bystander* (Doubleday, 1966), as a work that illustrates how spiritual reflection can be brought to a still deeper level of social awareness.

**Marianne Williamson** In *A Return to Love* (HarperCollins, 1992), Marianne Williamson offers her reflections on *A Course in Miracles* (Foundation for Inner Peace, 1975), a three-volume spiritual workbook alleged to have been channeled through a Jewish psychiatrist, Helen Schucman, directly from Jesus Christ. Williamson, whose own heritage is Jewish, attended AA meetings as part of her own spiritual quest, although she is not an alcoholic. She came across *A Course in Miracles* on someone's coffee table, worked her way through it, and her life was changed. She became a popular lecturer on the *Course*, with followers numbering in the thousands. A single mother, she is currently the New Age guru of many in the Hollywood set, as well as the founder of organizations on each coast that help persons with AIDS.

Williamson makes no mention in her book of the "channeled" origins of the *Course*, although she does frequently remind us that no one actually dies, they just move to a different channel. She retains trinitarian language from Christianity: Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. For her, though, "Jesus" is just a symbol of the love that is within one's heart, and the "Holy Spirit" is the force that will help one remove all of the fearful thinking that covers over one's inner perfection. There is really no such thing as sin; the story of Adam and Eve describes the trouble that can arise when one begins to "judge." Williamson claims that Christians don't own exclusive rights to the language of Christianity. She explains that in the *Course* Christian words "are used for their psychological rather than their religious significance."

Williamson focuses skillfully, even hauntingly, on the need to surrender one's self to God. Self-surrender issues in "miracles," which are most fundamentally "changes in outlook" that occur as the basis of one's perceptions shift from ego and fear to God and love. This is the heart of her spirituality. The late Bernard Lonergan pointed out that it is possible to be religiously converted without being intellectually converted: one can truly encounter and be transformed by the love of God that is in one's heart without being able to articulate the relation of that love with other complex realities.

For all of her religious authenticity and the depth of her spiritual insights, Williamson holds strange beliefs in the intellectual realm, not just about Christian doctrine but about many other matters. Money is not finite, she tells us; everyone could be rich; if you feel depressed about poverty, start giving five dollars a month to help the poor. The key to healing is all in the mind; we take medicine only because we are not advanced enough spiritually.

However, one does not have to buy into Williamson's denial of sin, her reductionist use of Christian terms, or her eccentric social views to be touched deeply by the genuineness of her conversion and by her ability to share this in a winning way. And for those who live life in the driver's seat, Williamson provides powerful therapy to "let go and let God." But I would suggest that readers also try Dorothy Day's autobiography, *The Long Loneliness* (Harper & Brothers, 1952), itself the story of a single mother whose conversion intertwined with her commitment to service, but whose awareness of sin, reverence for tradition, and personal commitment to poverty stand in contrast to Williamson's approach.

**Thomas Moore** Thomas Moore is the author of *Care of the Soul* (HarperCollins, 1992) and *SoulMates* (HarperCollins, 1994). Moore combines spiritual guidance with an exploration of myth and tradition. Before becoming a therapist, Moore lived in a Catholic religious order for twelve years. He left shortly before ordination, but still regards his work as priestly. He frequently uses stories from the Christian Scriptures to make his points, though he as often draws upon Greek mythology, Romantic poetry, and Renaissance psychology. His main source of inspiration, however, is Carl Jung.

Moore's style is a cross between M. Scott Peck and the late Joseph Campbell. He mixes psychological vignettes with the fascination of relating myths to our life-journeys. He manifests the Jungian brilliance of maintaining a creative tension among the various elements of the psyche. This is the core of his spirituality. Moore is never one to advise shrinking from one's shadow. Problems become unopened doors; dilemmas become new horizons; terrors are transformed into opportunities for growth.

Moore's positions, however, are not without their own eccentricities. Following the Renaissance hermetic philosophers, Paracelsus and Ficino, Moore proposes an animistic vision of the universe, one in which all of creation is experienced as being alive. This view goes hand in hand with Moore's assertion that a scientific perspective is just another mythology. Surely rationalistic and reductionistic world views need to be challenged, but Moore's Romantic concepts avoid rather than come to grips with scientific viewpoints.

Though Moore encourages people to be guided by ritual and formal religion and to grant "special status and honor" to the dogmas of their own religions, he himself seems to speak from a privileged place above and beyond any particular religion. When he does reflect on the stories of Christianity, he uses them as individualized pieces cut off from the whole. He mines the baptism of Jesus or the parable of the laborers for whatever psychological nuggets he might uncover, but never acknowledges that these take on their fullest meaning only within the larger context of who Jesus is and what the Christian faith is all about. To augment Moore, I recommend John Dunne's *The Way of All the Earth* (Macmillan, 1972), which models "passing over" into another tradition and then "coming back" into one's own, while respecting the integrity of each.

**John Bradshaw** Like Moore, John Bradshaw lived within a Catholic religious order for close to a decade and dropped out shortly before ordination. Bradshaw's seminary days were characterized by alcoholic drinking. He became famous through his PBS series, *Bradshaw On: The Family*, in which he combined the explosive energy of recovery from alcoholism with useful tools for analyzing family dynamics. Bradshaw is a compelling speaker who exhibits a no-holds-barred honesty as he gets in touch with his rage. He is one of the main popularizers of the term "dysfunctional family."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In his most recent book, *Creating Love: The Next Great Stage of Growth* (Bantam, 1992), Bradshaw blends his work on the inner child and family dynamics with a broader reflection on spirituality and the meaning of human relationships. He acknowledges the strong influence of both Peck and Moore. For Bradshaw, spirituality involves learning to relate to God and others in ways that are real rather than "mystified." Mystification, a term Bradshaw takes from psychiatrist R.D. Laing, is "an altered state of consciousness in which a person feels and believes that there is something wrong with them as they are, and creates a false self in order to be accepted by their parents or other crucial survival figures." Real love replaces mystified love when adults work through the childhood pains that bind them in reactive patterns and they become free to take on the responsibilities of soulful interaction.

Bradshaw is a creative synthesizer whose ability to package ideas and model their relevance with personal examples has helped many people. However, the blunt edges of his brutal honesty and his confrontational approach to rooting out the ills from one's family of origin can, in some cases, result in more harm than good. And, though he acknowledges the value of religious community and ritual, his examples reveal his own unresolved resentments toward formal religion. Sebastian Moore's *Let This Mind Be in You* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985) deals with the connection between spirituality, memories, and the working through of one's development, but is less accusing and more grounded in the tradition.

**Joseph Girzone** In 1986, Joseph Girzone retired from the active Catholic priesthood on the advice of his physician. Girzone, a priest for many years, had been warned that he was heading for a stroke. Perhaps Girzone's symptoms were stress-related: he had already begun to articulate his frustrations by writing *Joshua: A Parable for Today* (Macmillan, 1983). This enormously popular work, later followed by several sequels, tells the story of Jesus (Joshua) returned to life in the modern age. Joshua attends all the different churches and also the synagogue. He shares his simple wisdom, which contrasts sharply with the hardheartedness of contemporary religious leaders, most of whom are cast in the role of the Pharisees. Because Joshua teaches that religion today is not what it was intended to be, he is brought to trial at the Vatican. However, the entire book functions as a trial in which the churches, especially the Catholic church, are indicted for their institutional sins.

*Joshua*'s appeal comes from the simplicity of its message. Despite an almost adolescent quality in its style, it leaves one with the feeling that there are deeper dimensions to reality, that these dimensions are accessible, that simplicity and wisdom go hand-in-hand, and that complexity and even corruption in the institutional church do not have to get in the way of the spirituality of the ordinary believer.

Girzone gives a more direct statement of his views in *Never Alone: A Personal Way to God* (Doubleday, 1994). Here he defines spirituality as a "mystical friendship with Jesus" requiring that "we open ourselves to God, and show a willingness to follow his grace in our lives." Girzone


BOSTON COLLEGE

"Be informed, formed and transformed..."
Thomas Groome

Study at the Institute

- DISCOVER BOSTON AND HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND
- FLEXIBLE PROGRAM OPTIONS FOR STUDY
- ENRICHING LITURGICAL AND SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES
- CONTINUING EDUCATION, SABBATICAL PROGRAM AND DEGREE OPTIONS
- M.A., M.A./M.S.W., AND M.Ed., C.A.E.S. AND PH.D IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
- GENEROUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND GRADUATE STUDENT HOUSING

SESSION ONE: June 26-July 7

| | |
|---|---|
| Bernard Cooke | Ancient and Contemporary Christologies |
| Thomas Groome | Sharing Faith in Religious Education |
| Katheryn Pfisterer Darr | Introduction to Old Testament |
| Donald Dietrich | Vatican II and the Roots of Modern Catholicism |
| Doris Donnelly | Contemporary Sacramental Theology: What are the Theologians Saying? |
| Shawn Copeland | Foundations in Theology |

SESSION TWO: July 10-July 21

| | |
|---|---|
| Gustavo Gutierrez | Liberation Theology (July 10-14) |
| Jamie Phelps | Theology and Process of Inculturation (July 17-21) |
| John Coleman | Religion & Society: Discipleship and Citizenship |
| Michael St. Clair | Family Systems: A Theory for Pastoral Practice |
| Maria Harris | Teaching, Ministry, and The Religious Imagination |
| J. Cheryl Exum | Women and the Bible |

SPECIAL ONE WEEK COURSES: July 10-July 21

| | |
|---|---|
| Michael Himes | Theology of Ministry: Forming Faith Communities (July 10-14) Ministry and Spirituality (July 17-21) |
| Workshops: | Toinette Eugene, Catherine Vincie, Kathleen Gallivan, and James Shaughnessey |

SESSION THREE: July 24-August 4

| | |
|---|---|
| Barbara Bowe | The Gospel of John |
| Richard Gula | Foundations in Moral Theology |
| Merle Jordan | Pastoral Psychology and Theology |
| Margaret Kelleher | Christian Ritual and Transformation |
| Claire Lowery | Theology and Pastoral Practice |
| John Staudenmaier | The Media and Culture |

Boston College
For information, contact:
Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry
Department R
Chestnut Hill, MA 02167
800-487-1167 or 617-552-8440
SUMMER 1995




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

depicts God as so unconditionally loving and forgiving that he comes close to promoting what the late Anglican J.B. Phillips called "the God of the Heavenly Bosom," a God who is all comfort and no challenge, certainly not the God preached by Jesus. I was somewhat relieved, therefore, to see late in the book the inclusion of some balancing images, such as Jesus casting off those who refused to feed and clothe him as well as a final chapter on the importance of the Cross. But the sweetness and gentleness are still spread too thick for Girzone to capture anything like what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called the cost of discipleship.

Girzone contrasts the barrenness of church services "so antiseptic and sterile that people gathering for worship relate to others only on the most superficial level" with the power of AA meetings in which people express their hopes and pains. Although there is more than a hint of truth in what Girzone is saying, the comparison is heavy handed. For Catholics, it misses both the purpose of the Mass and the deep experience that millions of Catholics actually have of the Eucharist. Also, programs like Renew have spawned many support-style, faith-sharing groups without turning the liturgy into a massive therapy session. I recommend as an antidote Henri Nouwen's *With Burning Hearts: A Meditation on the Eucharistic Life* (Orbis, 1994), which attempts "to weave a network of connections between the daily celebration of the Eucharist and our daily human experience."

So what is the tremendous appeal of these books? Each is easy to read and each is endearing in its own way. Each attempts to reach that deepest part of our psyche from which we make our most fundamental decisions—whether we choose fear or trust, resentment or love, selfishness or God. But taken collectively, these works also reflect a larger cultural phenomenon. A social critic might argue that our consumerist culture has produced a literature that on the surface appears to challenge people, but that really reinforces the status quo by training individuals and small groups to conform to and benefit from the system without raising any deeper questions. These books redirect rather than confront society's individualist obsession with personal growth and fulfillment.

Such ideas are worth pondering. Today there is a great hunger for a spiritual dimension to life, as well as for a practical, accessible way to attaining it. In a culture where different religions and denominations seem to divide more than unite us, we search for that spiritual *lingua franca* that will enable us to communicate across fences about these most important of human concerns.

These advice books try to provide such a language. They do it by linking spirituality with what Carl Jung called "individuation," the process of becoming a differentiated individual who relies more upon one's own self to make decisions and less upon one's unexamined social conditioning.

There are various moments in the process of individuation. Early on, it can appear regressive. Narcissism can seem to heighten rather than slacken. Corresponding cultural fads in the '70s and '80s valued self-esteem, autonomy, unconditional love, and getting one's needs met. People bought books that told them to know their erogenous zones.

The current best sellers represent a more developed moment in this process. They both build upon and challenge the self-esteem movement. They're saying that there's more to life than subjective feelings; that personal fulfillment requires community; that the flip side of autonomy is responsibility; that when we run out of self we find God. From a Catholic perspective, these works might be read as a pre-evangelization for a more liturgically rooted, socially conscious, and biblically grounded presentation of the gospel message.

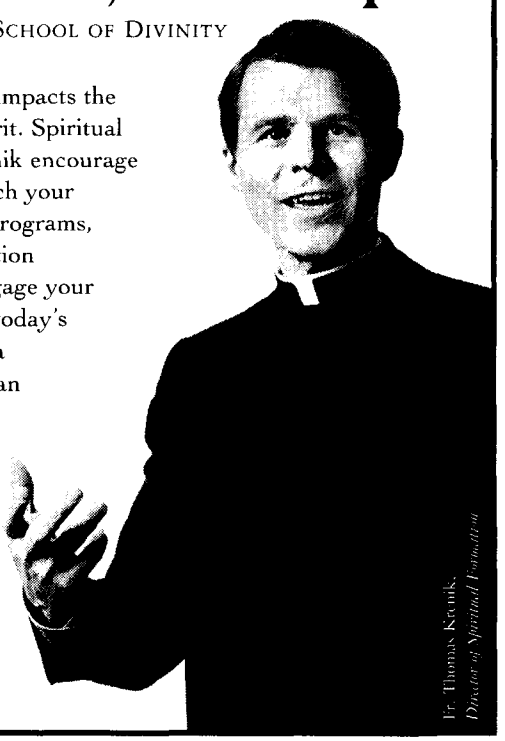
Many wares are for sale these days upon the supposedly less-traveled road of spirituality. For Catholics who avail themselves of such wares I have two suggestions. First, read also other works, such as those suggested above, that assume less of a dichotomy between spirituality and incarnational religion. Second, *caveat emptor*. Enjoy and learn from these best sellers, but read them the way their authors would have us view our church and traditions: critically, very critically. □


Follow your mind, heart & spirit

THE SAINT PAUL SEMINARY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

We believe theological study impacts the whole person: mind, heart, spirit. Spiritual directors like Fr. Thomas Krenik encourage your spiritual growth and enrich your participation in the academic programs, liturgies, and ministerial reflection opportunities we offer. We engage your experience of Christian life in today's culture and welcome you into a community centered in Christian mission.

- Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies
- Master of Arts in Theology
- Master of Divinity
- Doctor of Ministry



Fr. Thomas Krenik, Director of Spiritual Formation

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

(800) 328-6819 Ext. 2-5050
St. Paul, Minnesota

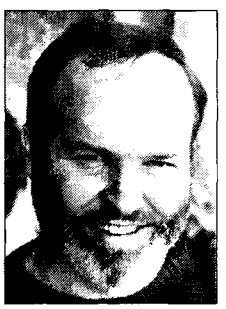



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

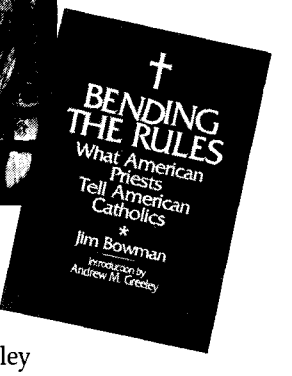
# Special and Demanding Graces

Miriam Therese Winter, Adair Lummis, and Allison Stokes
**DEFECTING IN PLACE**
**Women Claiming Responsibility for Their Own Spiritual Lives**
A pathbreaking book that reveals how American women—Catholic and Protestant—are redefining church and spirituality *on their own terms.* Based on a nationwide survey of more than 7,000 women who now speak out and bare their souls, this major book is sure to define a national, if not international, dialogue that is long overdue. $22.95 hardcover

Henri J.M. Nouwen
**HERE AND NOW**
**Living in the Spirit**
In his simple but profound style, America's most popular spiritual writer shares his insights about living the Christian life day-by-day and perceiving places old and new where God dwells and calls. He invites us all to live in the presence of God. $14.95 hardcover



Richard Rohr
**QUEST FOR THE GRAIL**
**Soul Work and the Sacred Journey**
Richard Rohr invites men to move outside comfortable boundaries and risk much on a greater calling—a journey of soul and spirit to find the Grail—spiritual and emotional health and wholeness. This is male spirituality at its best. $16.95 hardcover




Jim Bowman
**BENDING THE RULES**
**What American Priests Tell American Catholics**
Introduction by Andrew M. Greeley
"The official position of the Catholic Church is one thing. What a compassionate pastor says or does is often quite another." Told in priests' own words, *Bending the Rules* is the first book to present in detail what really goes on between priest and parishioner in day-to-day decision-making about moral issues and liturgical practice. It will provide a shock (or joy!) of recognition to Catholics, and will fascinate all readers. $19.95 hardcover

M. Basil Pennington
**VATICAN II**
**We've Only Just Begun**
A witness and consultant at the Second Vatican Council distills the essence of the Council documents, shares his view of the spiritual legacy of the conclave and challenges the Church to realize its vision now. "It is a special and demanding grace to live in a post-conciliar period."
—From the book $17.95 hardcover

Gabriel Meyer
**THE GOSPEL OF JOSEPH**
**A Novel**
Through a fictional device of ancient documents found in 19th century Egypt and translated here for the first time, Gabriel Meyer has woven into his tale of a deep relationship between father and son a literary tapestry which spans ages and genres: biography, mystery, archeological romance, male spirituality, historical novel—a book that you won't want to put down. $19.95 hardcover

Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer
**THE ART OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION**
"A resource that pastoral ministers and pastors across denominations have been waiting for. Must reading for all of us struggling to move beyond rhetoric into faithful theological practice."
—EVELYN EATON WHITEHEAD
$15.95 paperback

At bookstores or call **1-800-937-5557**

**CROSSROAD**
370 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Procrustean marriage beds

**SAME-SEX UNIONS IN PREMODERN EUROPE**
**John Boswell**
Villard Books, $25, 412 pp.

**Robert L. Wilken**

The term "same-sex union" used in the title of this book is a translation of a Greek phrase (*adelphopoiia*) which if translated literally would be rendered "making into a brother" or "adopting as a brother." The term is used in medieval Christian manuscripts written in Greek and Slavonic to identify an ecclesiastical rite. A representative prayer in such a rite reads as follows:

> Merciful and loving Lord, who has made man according to your image and likeness, who willed that your holy Apostles Philip and Bartholomew become brothers, bound to each other not by nature but by faith and spiritually; as your holy martyrs Sergius and Bachus were worthy to become brothers, bless these your servants N. and N.; being bound together not by nature but by faith and spiritually, give them peace and love and oneness of mind. Remove from their minds all stain and impurity and bring it about that they love one another without hate and without offense all the days of their lives. May the Mother of God and all the saints intercede for them. All glory is yours alone, O God.

This prayer was accompanied by ritual actions in which the persons to be joined placed their right hands on the Gospel book and held candles in their left hands. At the conclusion of the rite they kissed the Gospel book, the priest, and one another.

Such rituals are found, in the main, in liturgical books written in Greece or the Balkans between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. They are familiar to scholars of Eastern Christian liturgy and to legal historians, but are largely unknown to Western readers. This new study by John Boswell, a historian at Yale University, provides transcriptions as well as English translations (for the first time) of a representative group of these rituals and an interpretation of their meaning and historical significance. In Boswell's view these rituals for the binding of two males are equivalent to "heterosexual" marriage ceremonies and were used by Christian clergy in medieval Eastern Christendom to bless "gay marriages."

On an initial reading these rituals appear similar to marriage ceremonies. They refer to the joining of two people in lifelong relationship, they speak of a bond of peace and love and oneness of mind, they include ritual actions that parallel those of marriage ceremonies. Yet there are certain features of the rituals that are unlike marriage ceremonies. For example, the texts make it clear that the relation of the participants is spiritual not carnal ("by faith and spiritually"), there is no mention of the marriage bed, the term "marriage" is not used (as it is in marriage rites), the biblical readings are different from those used in marriage ceremonies, several of the rites, significantly, indicate that the relationship is that of an "elder" to a "younger," and the persons joined in the ceremonies are males.

A very telling bit of evidence that these are *not* gay marriage rites and that medievals knew the difference between these rituals and marriage ceremonies occurs in an eleventh-century manuscript from the Greek monastery at Grottaferrata in Italy. The relevant section is titled "Rite for the Making of a Brother." Included under this heading is a litany, a prayer by the priest, followed by another "prayer for the making of a brother." Immediately after this prayer a rubric is appended: "Then shall they kiss the holy Gospel and the priest and one another, and the service is ended." Next there is a heading similar to that at the beginning of the section "Rite for the Making of a Brother." This heading reads: "Ecclesiastical Canon of Marriage of the Patriarch Methodius" and it is followed by a prayer for the blessing of the "bond of marriage." This in turn is followed by another rubric which reads: "After this prayer the priest shall place the crowns on them and dismiss them."

Boswell argues that the prayer for marriage and the prayers for "making of a brother" belong to the same office, and that the phrase "the service is ended" does not mean the termination of one office but a division within the rite. In the manuscript, however, a line is drawn between the rite for the making of a brother and the prayer at a marriage rite. In a tortuous footnote Boswell tries to explain why the line does not mean a division within the manuscript. Yet the simplest explanation is that someone, while reading the manuscript, realized that prayers from different rites had been mistakenly copied together and drew a line between them to alert the reader that they come from different ceremonies.

What these rituals solemnize is not "gay marriages" but a form of ritualized friendship between males that had been practiced in the Eastern Mediterranean since the time of Homer. In book 6 of the *Iliad* as Diomedes and Glaukos are about to engage in combat, Glaukos identifies himself by mentioning the name of his ancestors. When Diomedes hears the name of Glaukos' grandfather, "joy came to Diomedes....With one thrust in the field he fixed his long spear like a pole, and smiled at the young captain, saying gently: 'Why, you are my friend! My grand-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

father, Oieneus, made friends of us long years ago.'" Because of their "friendship," says Diomedes, "I am your friend, sworn friend, in central Argos. You are mine in Lykia, whenever I may come.... Let those around us know we have this bond of friendship from our fathers."

In ancient Greece ritualized friendship was the only way, apart from marriage, of building alliances between cities and obligations between men. As the text from the *Iliad* indicates, the men who entered into such relations were married and had children. The making of a friend was accomplished through a ritual in which the one says to the other, "I accept you," "I make you my friend," or some such formula, and was accompanied by an exchange of gifts. Over time the gifts became symbolic and could be bones or clay tablets with inscriptions, sometimes divided into two parts that could be fitted together.

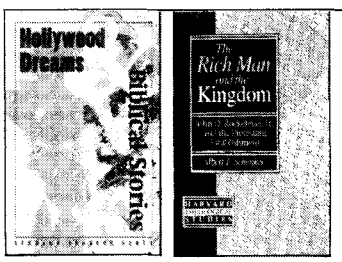
In the Eastern Roman Empire and the Byzantine world, ritual friendship became a way of legally adopting someone who was not a member of one's family for purposes of inheritance, or giving a person the benefits of association with a family different from one's own. On occasion in Christian monastic literature one finds warnings that monks should not participate in a ritual of "making of a brother" with someone outside of the monastery. Such unions were prohibited monks because they entangled them in relations involving money or property with persons outside of the monasteries.

These rituals were not the equivalent of marriage ceremonies. The persons who were bound by such friendship were usually married (or monks who had taken vows of chastity), and the language in the ceremonies about peace and harmony indicate that these rites were a way of joining persons or families who would otherwise find themselves at odds with each other. The love spoken of is not romantic love. Indeed in one of the prayers all the biblical examples of love refer to "spiritual love," and the biblical story of the love of two men for each other, David and Jonathan, is conspicuously absent. Further, there are clear prohibitions in medieval Eastern Christendom against homosexual activities, often imposing severe penalties. It is most implausible that the church would bless in its liturgy what it forbade in its laws.

There is much of interest in this book, and it must be said that Boswell has alerted contemporary readers to a dimension of Eastern Christian practice that is unknown in the West. The appendixes with texts and translations are valuable, the citations from ancient and medieval sources illuminating, and the bibliographical references indispensable for any future work on the topic. This however is a domain of specialists. On the central question, "Did medieval Christendom bless 'gay marriages'?", Boswell has no case.

But this is not really a book of history, the author's protestations to the contrary. Boswell insists that his purpose in writing the book is only "to reflect accurately" on what has happened in the past, but it is clear that the book has a contemporary social agenda. "Recognizing that many—probably most—earlier Western societies institutionalized some form of romantic same-sex union


Discovering Religious America




**HOLLYWOOD DREAMS AND BIBLICAL STORIES**
BERNARD BRANDON SCOTT
Juxtaposes 50 recent American movies—from *Dirty Harry* to *Robocop II*—with New Testament themes to uncover the mythic dimensions of each and to explore the primary conflicts in American society. 240pp $16.00 paper Code 1-2753

**MANY ARE CHOSEN**
**Divine Election and Western Nationalisms**
Edited by WILLIAM R. HUTCHISON and HARTMUT LEHMANN
Contributors shed light on how religious symbolism, especially the biblical rhetoric of "chosenness," figured in the expression on nine nationalist ideologies: South Africa, Switzerland, France, Germany, Israel, the United States, African Americans, Great Britain, and Sweden.
176pp $16.00 paper Code 1-7091

**RELIGION IN THE NEW WORLD**
**The Shaping of Religious Traditions in the United States**
RICHARD W. WENTZ
An engaging, inclusive, and novel history of American religion that includes contributions from sectors of American society.
400pp $22.00 paper Code 1-2424

**NEW VISIONS FOR THE AMERICAS**
**Religious Engagement and Social Transformation**
Edited by DAVID BATSTONE
David Batstone gathers views addressing the new context of liberation, especially around issues of race, class, and gender.
160pp $13.00 paper Code 1-2690

**THE RICH MAN AND THE KINGDOM**
**John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and the Protestant Establishment**
ALBERT F. SCHENKEL
Schenkel investigates this century's foremost religious philanthropist and opens a window on the self-understanding of liberal American Protestantism as it embraced and then succumbed to the "modernist" impulse.
192pp $14.00 paper Code 1-7092

**PROFESSING THE FAITH**
**Christian Theology in a North American Context**
DOUGLAS JOHN HALL
An ambitious attempt to discern and respond theologically to the most salient features of contemporary North American life. "May well be the most comprehensive and profound work of systematic theology produced in North America in our lifetime."—JOHN C. BENNETT
560pp $35.00 cloth Code 1-2546

**UNGODLY WOMEN**
**Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism**
BETTY A. DeBERG
"Surveying the popular writings of men prominent in the rise of fundamentalism, DeBerg thoroughly documents their commitment to Victorian ideals of domestic relations and sexual mores."
—JAMES H. MOORHEAD, *Theology Today*
144pp $11.00 paper Code 1-2439

FORTRESS PRESS
At bookstores or from Augsburg Fortress, Publishers
426 South Fifth Street, Box 1209
Minneapolis, MN 55440-1209
Postage and handling additional
1-800-328-4648




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gives us a much more accurate view of the immense variety of human romantic relationships and social responses to them than does the prudish pretense that such 'unmentionable' things never happened." By claiming to discover a historical basis for "same-sex unions" within Christian tradition, Boswell wishes to legitimate the introduction of "gay-marriage" ceremonies in the contemporary Christian church. This gives the historical and philological discussions an immediacy, but also a poignancy. Underneath the argument there is a quiet plea for acceptance.

But the price Boswell exacts from sympathetic readers is high. To make his case he must impose on the texts meanings they cannot bear and wrench them out of their context in medieval Christian society. Only if one loads words and terms—for example, marriage, love—with overtones that are alien (and derived from contemporary Western speech), can one begin to envision what Boswell imagines. No doubt this is why there is so much throat clearing and redefinition in an introductory chapter titled "What's in a Name?: The Vocabulary of Love and Marriage."

Boswell's argument has an underside. In his view Christian resistance to homosexual activity and "gay-marriages" is a result of prejudice. As in his earlier book, *Christianity, Tolerance and Homosexuality*, Boswell claims that Christian prohibition of homosexual acts is a relatively late development in Christian history lacking foundation in earlier Christian tradition. He does not allow that there may be biblical, theological, and moral arguments undergirding traditional Christian views. Using charged language ("rabid and obsessive negative preoccupation with homosexuality as the most horrible of sins"), he argues that it is only "Western horror" and "visceral revulsion" over homosexual unions that led to the suppression of these rituals.

*Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* creates a world that never existed, misrepresents Christian practice, and distorts the past. This is a book on a mission, scholarship at the service of social reform, historical learning yoked to a cause, a tract in the cultural wars, and it is in that spirit that it should be read. □

# A SPLENDID STEW

**BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE**
**Peter Quinn**
Viking Penguin, $22.95, 612 pp.

**Elizabeth Bartelme**

Irish history, like the history of the Jewish people, embraces diaspora, exile, suffering, and a vision of the promised land. In his remarkable first novel, Peter Quinn, chief speechwriter for Time Warner, brings a new and formidable talent to the chronicling of Irish wanderings and their outcome. Although the emphasis of the book is on the Irish experience in nineteenth-century New York, Quinn goes beyond it to include on a broader canvas the entire sweep of a history steeped in the bitter fruits of subjugation. Nor does he neglect the Yankees and the free blacks who were so much a part of the New York Civil War tumult, and who were respectively the masters and the foes of the Irish.

As he draws together the strands of his narrative, Quinn moves between Ireland and New York, turning the latter teeming metropolis into a village that becomes his own American Nighttown. Here the immigrants, the "Paddys," go about their dubious business, survival uppermost in their minds, displaced only by the oblivion of a night's drinking. Here, too, they vie with the blacks for the menial jobs they are terrified of losing, and vent their anger and hatred of the Yankee "ratnoses," the Know Nothings or true Americans, who are indifferent to the miserable poverty around them, or prey on it.

These antagonisms and fears erupt in the draft riots of 1863, when the poor of New York battle armed federal troops, using bottles, paving stones, and arson. Out of control, the rioters maim and murder a poor dwarf, Squirt, believed to be the offspring of the lovely Eliza La Plante and her white lover, Jack Mulcahey. When the carnage is over, and the dead are buried, a new direction is indicated for each of the main characters.

And what richly realized characters they are, almost Dickensian in their variety and quirkiness: Jimmy Dunne, likable and resourceful, though hardly the conventional hero, who is rescued from Great Plains servitude by a tornado to become a New York hustler; Eliza, beautiful and a gifted actress, starring in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and as well, the light of Jack Mulcahey's life. Mulcahey himself is the greatest of the blackface minstrels, performing his routines nightly to the music of Stephen Foster. And what of Margaret O'Driscoll, devout maidservant ready for the main chance, which could be Dunne?

There are others: Charles Bedford, Wall Street entrepreneur and hustler in a different mode, taking his chances at the faro table in Morrissey's gambling establishment and losing to the implacable owner. And how will this sit with the whining fence, Capshaw, who has Bedford between a rock and knife for improper securities dealings? We encounter, too, Colonel Robert Noonan, administrator of the draft, an honorable man hated by his compatriots who see him as a threat to their independence. Stephen Foster lurches from saloon to saloon, accompanied by his fictional great friend, One-eyed Jack Cassidy.

Over these and a host of minor characters is the brooding figure of Archbishop

## REVIEWERS

ROBERT L. WILKEN *is the William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of the History of Christianity, University of Virginia, and the author, most recently, of* The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History *(Yale).*

ELIZABETH BARTELME *is an editor and a former professor of English at Hofstra University.*

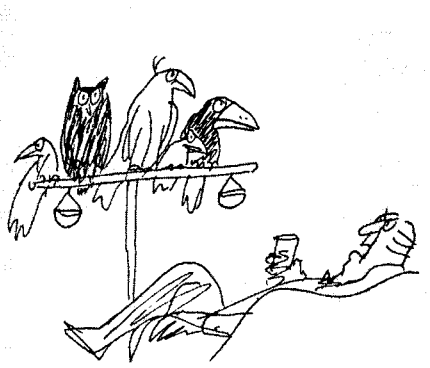
ROBERT WORTH *is a graduate student in English at Princeton University.*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

John Hughes, who truly sees his "banished children of Eve" as the exiles they are, a people wandering in the wilderness, in need of saving. He is determined that it will be he who leads them out of their degraded situations and into the promised land and to this end he is building his cathedral. The scene of Hughes on the scaffolding of the just-begun Saint Patrick's, attended by his sycophantic auxiliary, is one of the most dramatic and at the same time most comical scenes in the novel.

The research that informs the narrative is so smoothly and seamlessly integrated that it would hardly be noticeable were it not for the ebb and flow of the historical underpinnings. Quinn handles with great skill the events of the months leading to the draft riots, and at the same time acquaints the reader with the history of the famine-cursed Irish, the terrible blight that brought about the migration. With tenderness and compassion he describes the pain and sorrow of those famine years in Ireland, the wrenching farewells of parents to children whom they would never see again, the panic and despair of the greenhorns landing at Castle Garden in New York. And the survivors—what of them? Pickpockets, whores, servants: Was being in service to the Protestant Ascendancy any better than starving in Ireland?



*"Motley crew!"*

Well, yes. Although *Banished Children* arrives at no conclusions of this kind, the epilogue opens up possibilities for the future. Here Quinn's controlled sense of irony has full play as he draws the reader beyond the riots into calmer waters. And comedy, too, is one of his gifts, for who could resist his more raffish characters as they reel in and out of bars and brothels, declaiming, singing, cadging drinks. His creations, then, are living, breathing, original habitués of the dens and warrens of nineteenth-century Manhattan. Beyond that they are, some of them, men and women with aspirations, longing for a better life, and with only the thinnest slice of hope to keep them going.

That they have been celebrated in this splendid stew of a book is a tribute to their resilience and to the overflowing life with which they have been filled by their creator. His empathy, knowledge, and masterly narrative have brought them into being. Flawed and broken though they are, these "banished children" are irresistible. Peter Quinn's achievement is to have brought them alive in a historic moment and to have given us a historical novel of stature and breadth. □


# DISCIPLES AND DEMOCRACY

## Religious Conservatives and the Future of American Politics

Edited by MICHAEL CROMARTIE

The religious right, currently the subject of intense press attention, is here scrutinized by both insiders and outside observers. Journalists **Fred Barnes** (*The New Republic*), **Michael Barone** (*U.S. News & World Report*), and **E. J. Dionne** (*Washington Post*), activists **Ralph Reed** (Christian Coalition) and **Michael Farris**, and scholarly analysts **John Green**, **Allen Hertzke**, **Michael Horowitz**, **Richard Land**, and **George Weigel** examine the agenda of religious conservatives, their influence upon the 1992 election, and whether and how they can increase their political influence in the next four years. In a foreword, **Irving Kristol** calls religious conservatives "the very core of an emerging American conservatism." The volume, published jointly by the Ethics and Public Policy Center and Eerdmans, includes brief comments by eighteen other informed observers as well. **147 pages, paper, $12.99** ■ ISBN 0-8028-0847-6

*"The rise of the religious conservatives is a hot topic, and this is an indispensable study and critique. A lively, solid, and serious piece of work."*
— MICHAEL NOVAK, American Enterprise Institute

*"A highly thought-provoking and well-balanced introduction to a subject that is not just difficult but combustible."* — CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER, syndicated columnist

*Available in bookstores or from:*

**ETHICS AND PUBLIC POLICY CENTER**

1015 15th Street N.W., #900 ■ Washington, D.C. 20005 ■ (202) 682-1200




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# LOOKING DOWN AT HIS LIFE

**A WAY IN THE WORLD**
**V. S. Naipaul**
Knopf, $23, 380 pp.

**Robert Worth**

Fiction and autobiography have never been entirely separate genres, and in his latest book V. S. Naipaul walks that perilous line more closely than he ever has before. *A Way in the World* is less a novel than a grand, fictionalized meditation on Naipaul's colonial heritage and his life as a writer. The opening of the book has an irrevocable quality, the words flowing out like a broadening river delta, in a style so simple that it seems no style at all. And this despite the narrator's admissions about his own tortuous progress as a writer, his engagements with politics, his often harsh judgments of other writers. Naipaul's first triumph, in other words, is one of tone: he seems to be looking down at his own life from above, seeking the significance of every human encounter he perceives or imagines from the grand, celestial chair of History.

Naipaul's subject is familiar: the chaos of life and politics in the postcolonial third world. Born in Trinidad to an East Indian family, Naipaul was at a double remove from the England where he arrived as a young man with literary ambitions. His first few novels, culminating in the brilliant *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), are comic accounts of life in Trinidad with a bitter edge to them: there is no escape from the sordid irrelevance of these lives. That bitterness became more palpable in Naipaul's later books, many of them nonfictional, in which he traveled to India, Africa, South America, and the Caribbean.

Where Western leftists had applauded the third world's liberation from colonialism and looked with hope toward the future, Naipaul chronicled the present with an unremitting eye for corruption and savagery. In his travel books of the 1970s and in the fiction that grew out of them, including the extraordinary *A Bend in the River* (1979), he displayed no sentimental affection for the precolonial cultures of his subjects. They are difficult books to read, fraught with a prophetic sense of chaos and futility and—at times—with an almost misanthropic fastidiousness. They earned Naipaul the wrath of left-wing critics like Edward Said, who called him a "scavenger" among the ruins of empire. But Naipaul was quick to respond that optimism is easy for those who can catch a plane home and forget what they have seen. "I do not have the tenderness more secure people can have toward bush people," he once told an interviewer. His writing was vivid precisely because it registered the fear of an exile who could not take his first-world status for granted.

In a sense, *A Way in the World* represents an elaborate return to the Caribbean of Naipaul's youth, an effort to do full justice where he had once offered bitter comedy and harsh political appraisal. As the narrator says of his younger self: "his judgments, the angle of his observations, his jokes suggested he knew another, better world. That phantom world, which came with the first, innocent wish to be a writer, was hard to get rid of." Naipaul has not, however, changed his views; he has merely shifted his vehicle, undertaking a Proustian exploration of his own life and heritage. The new voice that emerges is gentler, more sympathetic than anything in Naipaul's prior work. And he uses that voice to write about other people, both living and dead, whose lives have intersected with his own. There is the story of LeBrun, for instance, a black Marxist from Trinidad who is clearly based on the activist and writer C. L. R. James. Naipaul writes with disarming honesty of the effect LeBrun's criticisms have on his own writing, and he shows a persistent sympathy for the man, as a fellow exile in England, despite his utter disaffection from LeBrun's radical politics. In the end, without withdrawing from his judgments, he writes passionately about LeBrun's struggle:

> The profile-writers and television interviewers, who promoted him with self-conscious virtue...had no means of understanding or assessing a man who had been born early in the century into a very hard world, whose intellectual growth had at every stage been accompanied by a growing rawness of sensibility, and whose political resolutions, expressing the wish not to go mad, had been in the nature of spiritual struggles, occurring in the depths of his being.

Here and elsewhere in the book, Naipaul appears to be writing about himself in oblique ways. As in his last book, *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), he is interested in death, in the ways a life's ending can be true or false to the spirit of that life. *A Way in the World* ends with a moving account of his own thoughts about a man named Blair, a black Trinidadian whom he had known as a boy, and whose murder in East Africa seems a horrible betrayal of his life and work. These questions resonate throughout history in Naipaul's imagination, and the most unusual parts of *A Way in the World* are the extended historical fantasies about Sir Walter Raleigh and Francisco Miranda, whose adventures in the West Indies are presented as unwritten stories that linger in the narrator's mind.

At times, this self-conscious method makes for a good dramatic vehicle: a man, after a life of wandering and exile, ponders his roots. But the historical fantasies go on too long, becoming dry and monotonous; one has the sense that Naipaul has gotten carried away and left his readers behind. And this failing is linked to a larger flaw in Naipaul's work. He has often expressed scorn for the facilities of mere plot and style, and for the readers who expect such things. That scorn is a by-product of Naipaul's own austere concern with history, with truth, with fidelity to experience. But to ignore the amenities of fiction is to risk giving up on fiction altogether. The only thing holding *A Way in the World* together is Naipaul himself. He is a great man, with a great imagina-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion, so the book is a good one. But he could write a better book, if only he would put his own struggles aside, step away from the stage, and recover the humble story-telling skills that made his reputation in the first place. □

## CORRESPONDENCE

*(Continued from page 2)*

Would not serious discussion of the moral and ethical aspects of birth control be better served by a more neutral terminology? To this end, I offer a modest proposal: First, let us recognize that every practice designed to prevent intercourse from resulting in pregnancy is a form of contraception, and call it that. Second, let us distinguish among these practices by descriptive phrases that identify briefly, without problematic philosophical and moral connotations, how each practice attempts to attain this same goal. For example, we might call the use of condoms and diaphragms "contraception by physical barrier" (CPB) and the practice of coitus interruptus "contraception by early withdrawal" (CEW).

And what about the rhythm method? No need to use the troublesome phrase NFP. Instead, call it CSI—"contraception by scheduling of intercourse."

THOMAS O. MITCHELL

### Grounds for assent

Notre Dame, Ind.

*To the Editors:* In his response [July 15] to *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*, Robert George correctly points out that religious assent to a pronouncement of this status may be legitimately withheld *only* where some factual error or teaching of superior authority requires the conclusion that the pronouncement in question is false. Of your six respondents, only Professor George and Father Avery Dulles seem prepared to follow the council and give religious assent to *Ordinatio*.

Did any of the other respondents supply a predicate for withholding religious assent? I think not. Much—perhaps the bulk—of the reservations they expressed were feelings of regret, disillusionment, hopelessness. But feelings are not reasons to assent to or dissent from any proposition. Feelings are not reasons at all. A pervasive criticism is that the teaching on women's ordination is unjust. But that claim is adequately met by George's reply.

Catherine Mowry LaCugna's contribution does speak at times of the types of reasons—tradition, revealed truths—that might form a predicate for withholding religious assent. But LaCugna nowhere claims that the teaching—that ordination of women is impossible—is contradicted by such sources. Rather, she offers counterarguments (unsound, at that) to some of the pope's arguments for the teaching. But the truth of the teaching does not logically depend upon the arguments adduced for it. And LaCugna cannot reasonably believe that religious assent may be withheld because of doubts about the pope's arguments. Nothing in the tradition supports such a claim. The claim itself is nonsense. If it were sound, there would be no need for the concept of "religious assent." The arguments for a teaching would have to be conclusive before one could be required to give religious assent. But if the arguments were conclusive, no rational person could doubt the teaching anyway. "Religious assent" drops out of the picture entirely.

Any Catholic who is unhappy with *Ordinatio* has only three options. He or she can:

(1) Deny that *Ordinatio* is the type of teaching that calls for religious assent;

(2) Accept George's advice to help formulate better arguments for the proposition that women's ordination is impossible;

(3) Deny *Lumen gentium* 25, the council document which specifies the duty of religious assent, and by implication deny the magisterium itself.

Of these, the first is hardly a live possibility, since the pope's use of "definitively" makes clear that *Ordinatio* is precisely the type of document the council had in mind in promulgating *Lumen gentium*. The third is hardly an option for Catholics, since it entails denial of an essential truth of the faith. Faithful Catholics, then, can only opt for the second choice.

GERARD V. BRADLEY

*The writer is a professor of law at the University of Notre Dame.*

### Church law, church life

Middlebury, Vermont

*To the Editors:* In the *Commonweal* retrospective on the ordination of women, Professor Robert George's comments were particularly striking because they were so completely contained within his own disciplinary perspective: legal philosophy.

George's approach is "definitive" provided one holds that the church is basically to be understood juridically. In the American legal system, for instance, there is a written Constitution which is the "law of the land" as interpreted by designated officials (the Supreme Court as final arbiter). In our legal system the "definitive" character of judgments is subject to two significant modes of radical change. There is in the Constitution a process of amendment, and Supreme Court justices change over time and may move from strict observance to broader intepretation or vice versa. It is a strength of the American legal system that these modes of change are rarely invoked. Whatever one may think on the substance of abortion, the Court majority ruling in *Casey*, affirming the importance of not overruling recent precedent (*Roe*), displayed essential constitutional wisdom.

Suppose we transpose the structure of juridical constitutionalism to the church. The result will be the position of Professor George's gloss on *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*.

There are two significant additions to the constitutional assumptions in ecclesiastical theory. First, although Madison, Adams, Hamilton, *et al.* are revered Founding Fathers, they do not enjoy the extraordinary stature of speaking God's word to humankind. Presumably because of the recognized fallibility of even the best of human constitutions, provisions are made for their amendment.

A second significant difference between our political Constitution and the church constitution rests in claims about the judicial interpreter, the pope. The Supreme Court rarely confesses error and reverses past precedent, but it does happen; e.g., *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. The papal judicial interpreter, however, is never in error. Admittedly *Ordinatio* is not that solemn, *ex cathedra* infallible, but it



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

does brush the border of such claims.

All this makes perfect sense—except that it is not at all clear that laying on of all this legal constitutionalism can be derived from the New Testament. It may make sense for an organized church—any organization needs some sort of "constitution"—but, as one commentator noted, "Jesus came to proclaim the Kingdom of God, and what happened was the church."

Let me hasten to say that I am not herein suggesting some sort of free-wheeling community of instant charism, or a starchy sect of biblical literalism. The simple question to be asked is whether the New Testament story translates into the framework of "constitutionalism"; it seems plain on its face that it does not. Judaism, with its allegiance to Torah and the Law, seems a more likely candidate for constitutionalism, but at least the Rabbinic schools avoid "definitive" interpretation.

What has been definitive and effective about Christianity is not a set of constitutional laws and prescripts, but the story of Jesus crucified and raised by God's hand. In a recent novel, Iris Murdoch has a skeptical priest mull over what Christianity would be if all we had were the sayings of Jesus and not that harrowing life story. Not much—but it could be "constitutional" (if it remained at all in anyone's recollection). Ages of sages or a progression of popes might well mull over these Jesus sayings to arrive at the deep meaning of the master; one could be as strict or loose a constitutionalist as temper allowed.

But what if the church is not finally a constitutional institution organized around definitive statements and is, as has been claimed, in some mysterious manner the ongoing life of Jesus as Christ? If "the church" is Jesus alive with us, all this constitutional legalism seems just plain odd. To be sure, even ordinary law reflects life but by weirdly redescribing it. Second-degree felony battery reflects some sort of life, but we don't live that life.

Despite the generosity of *Commonweal*'s columns, this is not the place to attempt even a sketch of the nature of "church." I would only assert definitively that the "logic" of church is not easily borrowed from law. The church first of all is God's presence in the life (not the law) of Jesus of Nazareth. By way of contrast, the U.S. Constitution is not James Madison revived, for all that he may have contributed to that splendid document.

The pope's ruling on women's ordination is more critical than he may have realized. Priestly ordination is at the essence of church and who shall minister to the people of God. By trying to close the issue, the pope opens in the most fundamental manner the nature of church itself—including among other things the role of popes.

DENNIS O'BRIEN

*The writer retired this year as president of the University of Rochester.*

## Don't be wimpish

Sacramento, Calif.

*To the Editors:* The comments in your issue of July 15 on the pope's recent letter concerning the ordination of women strike me as wimpish. The pope's grasp of the evidence from Scripture and early church history is faulty. For example, the second chapter of Acts clearly states that women and men alike received the Holy Spirit. Peter was inspired to confirm this by quoting from the prophet Joel 3:1-5 (New American Bible). In Romans 16, Paul names many women, beginning with Phoebe, the deacon, who probably delivered his letter to Christians in Rome.

This dimension of our history is seriously neglected in our liturgy and teaching. We need to ask, as I did in a letter to the pope, why the use of inclusive language, as adopted in the New Revised Standard Version, was rejected in the new catechism. I use that language and have no intention of changing.

Again, the lectionary sorely needs revision to include more mention of women in the readings, particularly the many instances in which Jesus treated women as equals to men. He revealed his true identity for the first time to the Samaritan woman at the well, and she promptly told everyone she saw, acting as a true apostle. Mary Magdalen carried the news of the Resurrection to the male disciples, who refused to believe her.

In catechetics, children should learn about the women who were followers and friends of Jesus, as well as memorize the names of the Twelve. In pastoral work, the wives of today's deacons who study everything their husbands do should also be ordained, as was the case with Prisca (Priscilla) and Aquila, who are given equal mention by Paul for their work as a pair. And, in a period when women serve in many parishes in our country as pastors in every way except by presiding over the Eucharist, it is past time for them to be ordained. The sacrament comes before the rules. All Christians are entitled to the Eucharist; that was what Jesus intended at the Last Supper.

PATRICIA M. LEIPER


## CLASSIFIED

RATES: 90¢ per word; 12 words minimum. Advance payment required. Discounts and monthly billing available for repeat advertisers. For additional information call 212-732-0800 or write COMMONWEAL Classified, 15 Dutch St., Room 502, NYC 10038-3760.

**Sabbatical**

Create time and space for personal, spiritual, and theological renewal. Take advantage of far-ranging courses taught by distinguished faculty and the natural resources of the beautiful Bay Area with a semester or year-long sabbatical. Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley. (800) 824-0122.

**Write to the Pope**

On women's concerns. On June 20 the Vatican published a lengthy document in preparation for the Synod of Bishops to be held in Rome Oct. 2-29, which will be devoted to the topic of religious life. The document includes a statement that nuns and other women in the church should have a greater influence in decision making: "At a time when the church is rediscovering the variety of ministries...it is urgently necessary to clarify and give official recognition to the role which they exercise in the church." If you could be a part of this discussion, what would you say? I am preparing a book to be entitled I HAVE CALLED YOU; it will be a collection of women's letters to Pope John Paul II. Here is your opportunity to knock on the Pontiff's heart, sharing your concerns, dreams, and visions. Send your letter and a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Kathy Rasmussen, 870 S. Kline Way, Lakewood, CO 80226.




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Pilgrims at the Automat

ANNE CRAWFORD STORZ

I found salvation at the Automat. The one near Grand Central Station. The Automat: A child's paradise. Food on china plates in little glass boxes. Shove a couple nickels in a slot and turn a handle. The food was yours. Blink an eye and there was another china plate, ready for the next customer. It was a miracle.

As a child, I had a few wonderful treats at the Automat. But it was during my adolescence that the Automat became my sacred refuge. Those were serious years. Years of wrestling with sin and redemption. Hellfire and heaven. Big stuff.

I had won a scholarship to a Catholic high school in the Bronx. One that required ugly uniforms and brown oxford shoes. No lipstick. One that began every day with a studious examination of conscience.

Sister would take us through the Ten Commandments, slowly and thoroughly. We always seemed to linger on Number Six. So many possibilities there. A "bad thought," for instance. If we "consented" to it, did not chase it immediately away, we were guilty of a "mortal" sin. And that meant eternal punishment, unless we were rescued by confession.

I was a worrier. Parish priests heard confessions only on Saturdays. If I had a bad thought on a Monday and lost the battle against "consent," my soul would be stained for five days. I was healthy, but, there was always the possibility of an untimely death—and damnable consequences.

During this daily examination of conscience, we were supposed to keep our eyes closed. But one morning while Sister was outlining the sins of the Sixth Commandment and my heart was pounding, my eyes sprang open and clicked instantly with another pair of eyes two rows away. Bridget Mahoney and I exchanged a glance of mutual terror. An eternal friendship was born.

"I know a place where we can go to confession *today!*" Bridget whispered as we filed out of homeroom. "I'll meet you outside at three o'clock sharp!"

The resourceful Bridget knew that downtown, near Macy's, there were two churches where priests heard confessions all day, every day, every hour on the half hour. Oh, the spiritual wonders of New York City!

Our pilgrimages began.

"I have to go today. Can you come with me?" I'd whisper to Bridget on a typical morning as we walked from religion class to biology lab. Bridget always said yes. Tomorrow she might need my company on the same journey. "I gotta stay for cheerleading," she might say, "but I can be ready by three-thirty."

Three-thirty would find us racing to the subway platform, nickels in our fists, arms balancing textbooks and loose-leaf binders. We behaved angelically. Our uniforms advertised us as Catholics and it was important not to give scandal. Besides, we might get reported to the principal.

We'd arrive at Grand Central in twenty-five minutes and deposit our books in lockers. Bridget knew her way around better than I, so she always led our trail, first to the shuttle, then one express stop to 34th Street.

Our pilgrimage always ended at either Saint Francis Church on 32nd Street or Saint John's on 31st. (We'd take turns at each.) In memory, they are one church, softly lit, profoundly hushed. The heavy doors would close behind us, sealing off the noise of Manhattan. Often we'd be the only penitents for the four-thirty confession. Always we'd be the youngest. We'd confess in whispers, blessedly anonymous to the solemn profile across the heavy screen.

After confessing we'd say our penance at the altar rail. Such wondrous relief! Hellfire held at bay. Now if a truck ran us down or a mysterious illness suddenly struck, we'd be heaven-bound, with maybe just a short stay in purgatory. And so, buoyed by the lightness of our cleansed souls, we'd soar back on the shuttle to Grand Central. But instead of marching straight back to our locker, we'd detour for adventure.

We found it at the Automat.

Savoring our new purity, we'd float in the front door, gape at the glass cages of food, and count the change in our pockets. We'd pool our nickels and splurge on a dish of spaghetti or rice pudding. There is nothing quite like feeding the body after the soul has been purified.

Our most memorable pilgrimage took place the day we spent our last nickel. Between us we had just enough change to split a sandwich and a cup of hot cocoa. (Cocoa was always a favorite. It streamed from a silver faucet.) But a luscious piece of coconut cream pie tempted us through the glass. Two nickels. We counted our change: Two nickels between us, needed for the subway fare home.

It must have been Bridget's idea—she was the adventurous one. "So let's get it anyway. We can ask a cop for the carfare home." What a wonderful idea!

More than the taste of the pie (the best I've ever had, before or since) I remember the thrill of reckless abandon, as I watched our two last nickels disappear into the slot. There we were, repentant sinners, splurging on a voluptuous slice of cream pie with no thought of the future. It was the most daring event of our lives, an exhilarating risk. It wasn't even a sin.

Finding a policeman was easy, but asking him for the nickels was harder than I thought it would be. Bridget made me ask. She said she was tired of always leading the way. We passed a couple of cops before I got up the nerve. I white-lied and told him we had dropped our nickels "somewhere," which indeed we had. He dug into his pockets and gave us each another. "Now go right home," he winked. "Don't stop at the Automat!" It was a kindly joke, but it startled us for a second.

Then we bounced and rattled home on the subway. Free. Pure souls. Risk takers. And, for the time being, redeemed. □

*Anne Crawford Storz writes from Hamden, Connecticut.*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# New from Paulist Press

**ADVENT THIRST...CHRISTMAS HOPE**, Prayer and Meditation for the Journey, *Anita M. Constance*. A daily meditation book for the season that contains scripture, reflections, original prayers, and journal questions. **Paper $4.95**

**AGING IN THE LORD**, *Mary Hester Valentine, SSND*. A first-person account of aging that covers both the positives and negatives of the declining years, with emphasis on the spiritual awareness the elderly experience. **Paper $7.95**

**CODEPENDENCY: POWERLOSS, SOULLOSS**, *Dorothy May*. Questions and answers that are a finely tuned blend of information and real-life applications of work in the field of co-dependency. **Paper $14.95**

**CRYSTAL STAR ANGEL**, *Anita Joyce Skocz*, illustrated by Cynthia Lee Christy. In a children's story about the "true meaning" of Christmas, a boy heals the petty bickering of his family and neighbors and receives heaven's most precious treasure. **Paper $5.95**

**EARTH AGE**, A New Vision of God, the Human and the Earth, *Lorna Green*. An "earth-centered" spirituality that draws for us a new picture of our place in the universe. **Paper $8.95**

**HEALING SPIRITUAL ABUSE AND RELIGIOUS ADDICTION**, *Matthew Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn* and *Dennis Linn*. A description of the problems of religious addiction and abuse, as well as practical ways to find healing. **Paper $8.95**

**HOW TO READ THE BIBLE ALOUD**, Oral Interpretation of Scripture, *Jack Rang*. Practical and insightful methods that liturgists, lectors, and worship leaders can use to breathe life into biblical passages for their congregations. **Paper $10.95**

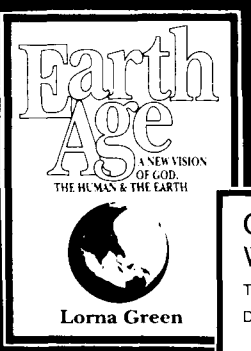
**IN GOD'S SHADOW**, The Collaboration of Victor White and C.G. Jung, *Ann Conrad Lammers*. Examines the friendship between these two extraordinary men that was built upon their intense, ongoing psychological-theological dialogue. **Paper $19.95**

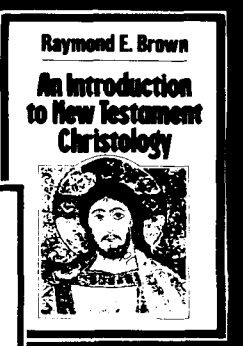
**AN INTRODUCTION TO NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTOLOGY**, *Raymond E. Brown, S.S.* An intelligible introduction to New Testament issues about the identity of Jesus: how he was understood in his lifetime and in that of his original followers, by the leading U.S. Catholic authority on the Bible. **Paper $9.95; Cloth $19.95**

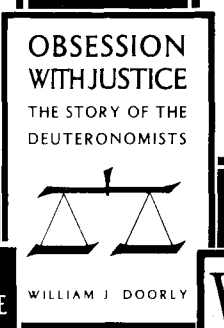
**ISRAEL'S PROPHETS**, An Introduction for Christians and Jews, *David J. Zucker*. An introduction to Israel's Prophets: their history, message, and literary content, along with information on how they are quoted in the Christian Scriptures and Rabbinic Midrashim. **Paper $11.95**

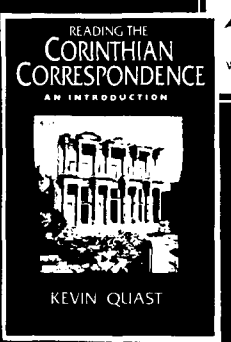
**OBSESSION WITH JUSTICE**, The Story of the Deuteronomists, *William J. Doorly*. An account of the Deuteronomists, a small circle of priests and scribes in the late seventh century that was responsible for the emergence of the first version of the Hebrew Bible. **Paper $12.95**

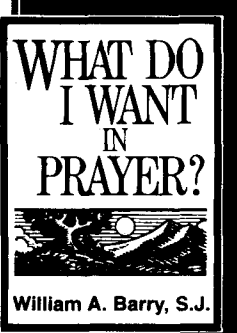
**A PAGE A DAY FOR ADVENT AND THE CHRISTMAS SEASON**, 1994, *Stephanie Collins*. Bestselling series of daily scripture and meditations in handy format with tear-out pages. **Paper $2.50**




**READING THE CORINTHIAN CORRESPONDENCE**, An Introduction, *Kevin Quast*. A clear, concise and thorough introduction to Paul's life and thought from the perspective of his extensive ministry in Corinth. **Paper $14.95**

**SACRED IDENTITY**, Exploring a Theology of the Person, *Jane Kopas*. Using story and human experience as a springboard, this book explores creaturehood as a metaphor of identity and the basis for a theology of the person. **Paper $11.95**

**TRANSFORMING THE MIND, HEALING THE WORLD** (Wit Lecture), *Joseph Goldstein*. These warm and accessible essays on the interplay of love, wisdom and compassion come from a Buddhist perspective, with a foreword by the Dalai Lama. **Paper $3.95**

**VISIONS OF THE OTHER**, Jewish and Christian Theologians Assess the Dialogue, edited by *Eugene J. Fisher*. Four noted theologians–two Jewish and two Christian–look at the future of inter-religious dialogue. **Paper $7.95**

**WHAT DO I WANT IN PRAYER?** *William A. Barry, S.J.* This series of readings and meditative exercises helps bring one's personal desires explicitly into prayer as a way for greater intimacy with God. **Paper $8.95**

**WORD AND WORSHIP DESK CALENDAR 1995**, edited by Ann Rossi McLaughlin. This spiral-bound desk calendar shows the designated Bible reading for the day, feasts and saints' days, rubrics, and chronological days in a handsome week-at-a-glance format. **Paper $9.95**

**WORD AND WORSHIP POCKET CALENDAR 1995**, edited by Ann Rossi McLaughlin. Fingertip guide to the designated Bible reading for the day, feasts, and saints' days. **Paper $4.95**

**PAULIST PRESS** 997 Macarthur Blvd., Mahwah, N.J. 07430 1-201-825-7300
Available at your local bookstore

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED